

# **Doctoral Thesis**

**Participants' voice: what works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments, in the further education college 'classroom'? Implications for learning, teaching and assessment.**

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**Doctorate in Education: EdD**

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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This thesis is concerned with learning, teaching and assessment in the Scottish Further Education College Sector.

The thesis employs a phenomenological approach to the collection, analysis and interpretation of data grounded in the experience of principal participants – senior managers, lecturers and students – in 4 further education colleges in central Scotland during academic year 2003/04. The research question was concerned with exploration and identification of teaching and learning strategies that enabled student success in assessments in FE, and the data collection was designed to elicit information about 'what works' from all parties involved.

Three theoretical lenses are offered through which participant perspectives can be read. Firstly, the policy context is assessed in terms of its neo-liberal managerialist tendencies, and the effects of these on teaching and learning are considered, with particular attention to the possible dissonance between performativity on the one hand and authentic social relationships on the other. Furthermore, the degree to which such dissonance may characterise the system, especially in relation to assessment, is considered. Secondly, teaching is presented as a craft with its own often tacit knowledge base which is to some extent shared by all participants, although there may be fractures between them. Thirdly, learning is discussed from a constructivist perspective from which other theories of learning are considered and critiqued.

The thesis is presented in 8 chapters. Following discussion of the macro level policy background in chapter 1, chapter 2 presents and unpacks how the research is shaped by key ideas from the relevant research literature. This is followed in chapter 3 by, at a general level, a description of the research methods employed. The next chapters focus on the data, including analysis of the data interwoven with further discussion of research methodology. This continues throughout chapters 4, 5 and 6 which



present the perspectives of the different participants. Chapter 7 then compares participant perspectives, and finally in chapter 8, implications for policy, practice and research are discussed.

The main conclusions reached by the study are as follows:

Firstly, although there was evidence of authentic social relationships between participants, these appeared to exist in dissonance with an emphasis on performativity in passing assessments, which appeared to be driving approaches to learning and teaching. Secondly, although participants share a common craft knowledge which valued cognitive and affective dimensions of classroom interaction, there were significant differences between the perceptions of senior managers on the one hand, and students and lecturers on the other. Thirdly, learning activity appeared to be concerned mainly with gathering and reproducing information, with little evidence of knowledge transformation or social construction of meaning.

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**Declaration**

I declare that:

- a) The Thesis was composed by myself;
- b) The work is my own;
- c) The work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification, except subsequently as evidence of research skills within a portfolio for the award of the Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) Level 5 in Operational Management.

John Morland Allan

2<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2005

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# CHAPTER 1

## Policy Context, Rationale and Approach, and Thesis Contents

### Introduction

Since I first entered employment in a College over 25 years ago, a combination of factors have altered the Scottish Further Education landscape almost beyond recognition. A continuous series of government policy initiatives, including and accelerated by the process of College incorporation in 1993, have brought in their wake wholesale changes to management structures, conditions of employment, student numbers, assessment regimes, certification systems, management and governance, and the normative values which underpin them.

I want to begin by providing a theoretical framework through which these changes and their consequences for learning, teaching and assessment in the Further Education College classroom might be read. Although there are critiques of this analysis, this may perhaps best be conceptualised as the emergence of neo-liberal ideology on a transnational scale, the globalisation of market liberalisation, and the rise of managerialist practices which were designed to better and more efficiently control and coordinate public services, which were seen to be inefficient and unresponsive to the needs of their “customers”. Although, welfare institutions in the late 1970s had been under attack from both sides of the political spectrum, those on the left suggesting that persistent inequalities were failing to be addressed, in the UK it was the emergence of the neo-liberal perspective within the Conservative Party which led to an attack on public spending costs, although the extent to which this actually led to cuts in public spending is contested (Hill, 1993) and the alleged “vested interests” of those who ran the Welfare Services (Beckmann and Cooper, 2004).

Before we discuss the possible effects on Scottish Further Education Colleges, however, it may be useful to say something about what are said to be shared

characteristics and effects of neo-liberal managerialism. Of course, in doing so it is important to take account of structural and post-structural critiques, to consider both the local, contingent and different, and the generalisable (Apple, 1996; Gewirtz; 1997). The extent of local, national and international change to systems and institutions and the extent of compliance or self managed, self motivated agency by individuals is contested (Gewirtz, 2000; Lindblad, Ozga and Zambeta, 2002). Thus although it is suggested that the spread of neo-liberal ideology in the 1980s has led to structural and relational changes associated with deregulation, decentralisation and devolution, along with marketisation on a global scale, it might also be argued that these 'travelling' policies may be mediated by the 'embedded' practices and cultures of different systems, producing local versions of policy (Ozga, 2005). At a more general level, however, the phenomenon of welfare state redesign can be said to have emerged across the developed world from a shared set of ideologically driven beliefs and assumptions that suggested that state financial problems could be tackled best by reducing welfare costs through the introduction of flatter, learner management in the public services and the breaking of the perceived control of public services by public service workers for their own ends, through the delegation of responsibility for budgets and performance to the local level. Managerialism, it is argued, at the local level thus works through an emphasis on competition, audit, accountability and performance management of institutions and individuals at the meso and micro levels. (Soucek, 1994; Gewirtz, 1997; Power, 1997; Clarke and Newman, 1997; Clarke, Gerwirtz and McLaughlin, 2000).

In the UK, with the election of the Conservative Party in 1979, the stage was set for the introduction of a process of redesign and reconstruction of the welfare state based around claims of the right of government and management to direct and co-ordinate public services. Although managerialism involves the introduction of specific techniques and practices from the private sector in the name of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, it is primarily a normative system which legitimises specific types of management practice and purposes, and serves the versions of knowledge it represents. Social progress is thus seen as being achieved best by the ability to act in a business-like way in order to achieve continual increases in productivity and as a



result management must be free to act in whatever way it thinks appropriate (Bottery, 2000). As Beckmann and Cooper put it:

*“Effectively, new managerialism is a hegemonic project that relegates the importance of other ethical values – autonomy, criticality, care, equality, respect and trust – in favour of narrowly defined economic priorities. There is no place for reflectivity, just pragmatism and the enforcement of whatever technical fix will turn the government’s latest mission into reality”. (2004, 7 and 8).*

Economy and efficiency are thus said to be privileged over other principles and as a consequence professionals cannot be allowed to subvert management aims and other forms of authority become subject to managerial authority. It might be argued also that there is a sense in which managerialism is seen as inevitable. Change is understood and accepted fatalistically as a consequence of global pressures which are ‘out there’. Simola et al (2002) use the term ‘topoi’ or banalities to describe ideas which are universally accepted as true, invalidating serious analysis. Managerialism is therefore justified as rational, effective and efficient. Critics would claim that its depoliticised status allows the polarisation and differentiation which is implicit in neo-liberal redesign to be disguised. Such critics would claim also that key managerialist terms like ‘client’, ‘customer’, ‘consumer’, stake holder’, ‘quantity’ and ‘excellence’ are hollowed out, meaningless substitutes for concepts like ‘service’, ‘citizen’ and ‘equality’ which were once central to public life (Linblad, Ozga and Zambeta, 2002). Indeed, a colleague recently described my college ‘Quality Week’ (a period mid-semester created for quality assurance monitoring purposes) as being more like ‘Quantity Week’.

Within the state education system, in common with other public services, the application of managerialism has been justified as a means of cutting costs, raising standards, and meeting the needs of British industry so as to improve its international economic competitiveness. Thus, economising education (Kenway, 1995) both in the sense of pursuing policies of efficiency and in the sense in which education is tied to economic ends, is claimed to lead to a situation where education’s contribution to broader societal needs is replaced by its function in the service of the

economy and economic growth. This of course has enormous implications for the ways in which education is organised and for planning, delivery, content and assessment. As Ozga and Deem suggest:

*“In the last 25 years education has increasingly been defined by policy makers along the lines of its economic functions, with a reduced emphasis on its cultural, social and political contributions and those applied to organisational forms, processes and curricular” (2000:414).*

In fulfilling this economic imperative managerialism is required to tackle inefficiency and the implied failure to provide the level of service expected. Effective, efficient and economic operation of public services depends therefore on public sector workers who are disciplined, regulated and accountable.

Managerialism can thus be characterised as the working through of neo-liberal market principles in redesigning the systems of public services. This is achieved through legislative change, the creation of intermediate agencies and the redesign of individual institutional structures. Further, systems of targeted funding, centralised monitoring and performance management along with publication of performance indicators and inspection and audit reports not only give the ‘customer’ a basis for selection but also provide a very powerful way of managing the work of those employed within the public services. Devolution to institutional level of responsibility for budgets and performance ensures processes of surveillance at the micro level. Such processes although effected through mechanisms like audit, inspection and appraisal also do their work on individual identity and social relationships.

Thus my thesis requires to be seen in the context of a system of “steerage” which has effected much greater government control than hitherto of public services through the introduction of the practices of managerialism, which are underpinned by neo-liberal market led assumptions about how best to provide them. The way in which Scottish Further Education is now organised and operated and the way in which those within the system, staff and students, go about their day to day business is illuminated by our understanding of this policy context.

From the late 1970s onwards, policy for Further Education like other areas of UK public policy, has been characterised by increasing government intervention aimed at ensuring greater efficiency and effectiveness. Jessop (1994) and Ozga (1998) suggest that the reformed state is preoccupied with economic objectives which focus on innovation, flexibility and competitiveness and thus subordinates the political and social. Over the next two and a half decades repeated media and government “campaigns” have served to undermine public confidence in the state education system, and in teachers in general, and have also undermined the confidence of the profession. These “campaigns” were initiated because local authorities and individual teachers were seen to have too much control over education policy, practice and provision, and as we have seen, these changes in public policy in the education system mirrored other changes across the public sector. In the management of housing, hospitals and welfare agencies generally, central government sought to establish new disciplinary conditions, centralising control, by contracting out services to the private sector and introducing legislation to delegate responsibility to local Boards of Management. Foucault (1995) suggests however that discipline is not simply imposed from above, rather people submit themselves to it in order to operate socially and economically, while Soucek (1995) suggests that neo-liberal policy change requires the educational system to mirror the private sector in its organisational forms and practices, leading to fundamental ideological change (Clarke and Newman, 1997), and Jessop (1998) discusses the extent to which such devolved governance represents the transition to a post-modern society or central Government attempts to control such a transition.

Whereas education policy direction in the 1980s and early 1990s focused on macro level structures, it might be argued that, as the 1990s proceeded, a target of government intervention became the classroom and the micro level. Control of teachers and teaching was effected through the introduction of systems of appraisal, the publication of performance indicators and the application of neo-Taylorist management practices.



The election of New Labour in 1997 and the election of the first Scottish Parliament in 1999, brought what appeared at first sight to be policy changes through the encouragement of inter-college collaboration, as opposed to the vigorous competition for students encouraged throughout most of the 1990s. However it might be claimed that this has not altered the fundamental position of Further Education Colleges as relay devices for a Central Government policy direction which seems ambivalent about public and private sector roles in providing public services. Indeed, Coffield (1999) suggests that the purposes of policies of collaboration are largely rhetorical in that they leave untouched the underlying effect of more powerful devices, especially funding steering mechanisms.

The development of New Labour, “third-way” (Giddens, 1998) policy, thus seems to mark another phase in modernisation and managerialism rather than a departure, although the extent of continuity and change is contested (Fergusson 2000) especially in Scotland ( Paterson 2001). The apparent contradiction between neo-liberal and social justice strands within policy is perhaps reconciled through the view that inclusion and wider access provide a route to social mobility which nevertheless promotes compliance and conformity by transferring the responsibility for failure to individuals and institutions, and away from government. At the same time, there is however a continuing focus on the role of education in enabling UK economic competitiveness and a retention and indeed proliferation of the education market. Education providers require to be business-like organisations who use managerialist methods to get results through the application of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time barred (SMART) targets, set within Strategic and Operational Plans, and are led by ‘transformational leaders’. Indeed, even ‘risks’ are now ‘managed’ within college plans. Thus managerialism can be seen to have moved into more explicit shaping of beliefs and work identities:

*‘Devolution and decentralisation also have the effect of creating a dispersed managerial consciousness, through the embedding of the calculative frameworks of managerialism throughout organisations ...all employees come to find their decisions, actions and possibilities framed by the imperatives of managerial co-ordination: competitive positioning, budgetary control, performance management and efficiency gains... people are*

*increasingly conscious that managerial agendas and the corporate calculus condition their working relationships, conditions and processes and have to be negotiated.* (Clarke and Newman , 1997, page 27 ).

### Policy and Practice

The relationship between policy and practice is of course not a simple and uni-directional, in that the two are connected and reinforce one another. It is important to understand the effects which macro level policy have on the meso and micro level of practice. It is therefore important to look beyond the surface evidence of the effects of managerialism, in order to consider its implications for organisations and individuals.

Given this policy context, I am motivated to write this thesis by a desire to make a contribution to our understanding of what is going on in the Scottish Further Education College classroom at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the name of learning and teaching. The terms learning and teaching are often used unproblematically in the sector, in policy documents and in day to day discussion. That is, they are seldom defined and to an extent they have, until recently, been largely taken for granted aspects of classroom processes. In addition, in examining learning and teaching, I want also to explore the role of assessment, which because of its pervasive place in the work of further education colleges may be key to our understanding of classroom pedagogy.

I am interested therefore in the possible links between managerialism and classroom interaction and more specifically in exploring the possible effects of managerialist steering mechanisms such as delegation, performance management, audit and accountability on learning, teaching and assessment, and the extent to which as education policy has become increasingly focused on its economic function, other broader objectives might have become marginalised. That is; the extent to which liberalisation and marketisation have consequences for the education system and society which may be damaging for social aims; the extent to which managerial forms of organisational control privilege freedom to manage over other discourses,

and of course; the extent to which the use of performance measurement has its effects on assessment systems and pedagogy. According to some academic critics (Lyotard, 1984; Ozga, 2000; Ecclestone, 2002) there is a tension between neo-liberal goals of redesign, that is, the aims of policy makers, and the effects of policy with its emphasis on performance, because it may be counter productive, in that it may create merely technical compliance (Habermas, 1972) inauthentic learning and compliant workers, including teachers, who have little critical capacity.

### Performativity

I am therefore particularly interested to explore the extent to which “performativity” (Lyotard, 1984), an emphasis on performance and technical compliance, characterises the Scottish FE College system. Lyotard believes that knowledge in the future will increasingly serve mainly pragmatic, functional purposes and that although it might make claims to be worthwhile in itself, it will become more and more instrumental. This privileging of instrumental knowledge marginalises critical knowledge (the questioning of conventional thinking in all of its forms) and hermeneutic knowledge (knowledge which arises from understanding of the self and others). He suggests:

*“the question overt or implied now asked by, the professionalist student, the state or institutions of higher education is no longer ‘is it true?’ but ‘what use is it?’. In the context of the mercantilisation of knowledge, more often than not this question is equivalent to: ‘is it saleable?’. And in the context of power-growth: ‘is it efficient?’” (1984, page 51).*

As a consequence, I am interested in exploring ways in which performativity in the Scottish FE College sector may do its work. Firstly, as a disciplinary system based on performance management targets which are used to judge and evaluate colleges, their staff and students. Secondly, the extent to which Colleges and the education system in general may have become commodified and both serve the market and become part of the market. Thirdly, performativity may work through language. The use of the terms efficiency and effectiveness, coupled with the language of audit and inspection, may have their effects on the possibility of authentic communication

within colleges, including learning. From this perspective participants firstly internalise and then promote self interest through micro-disciplinary practices which transform professional and personal subjectives and values (Ball 1997; Ecclestone 2002).

In relation to pedagogy and assessment I want to examine the connection between assessment forms which are inscribed in the language of performativity and classroom practice. To explore whether or not managerialism and performativity are affecting staff and student classroom interaction within colleges, creating staff and students who are compliant to the needs of the assessment system and in the case of students, the extent to which this encourages uncritical learning.

Specifically, I want to examine the relationship between Lyotard's concept of performativity and assessment and the implications for learning and teaching. I am interested in the extent to which the competence based assessment leads to competence based learning and teaching. That is, the extent to which assessment models and quality assurance systems are based increasingly on what Habermas (1972) calls 'technical rationality' (Hodkinson et al, 1998; Bloomer and James 2001). In a simple sense, competence based assessment is the assessment of whether or not someone can do something; if the assessment is passed, competence is inferred. In Lyotard's terms it is a grand design which itemises, specifies, standardises and systematises the goal of optimising performance outcomes. Thus knowledge is legitimated by its commodity status, its use value, rather than its truth. In such circumstances although it might be thought that the internal assessment system on which the majority of Further Education qualifications are based would give staff and students the chance to discuss and agree standards and negotiate meaning, I wondered if avoidance of the risk of failing both internal and external audit and the pressures of inspection and increasing work loads would lead to compliance with more narrow aims and practices?

In order to explore the possible effects of neo-liberal managerialist policy and the extent to which performativity might be said to characterise what is going on in the Scottish Further Education College classroom I am keen to base my work not on the third party observation of practice but on the actual day to day experience of the principal participants in the process, that is, further education college students, lecturers and senior managers. As a consequence, I employ what is broadly a phenomenological interpretative approach (Boland, 1991; Walsam, 1993; Deetz, 1994; Silverman, 2000) because I believe that phenomena are best understood through the meanings which are assigned to them by participants, based on their experience, rather than on explanations rooted in scientific positivism that there is a world “out there” which is independent of people, and objectively knowable and empirically testable. The views of participants or participant voice, is still a neglected area within educational research, and this is particularly the case in the generally under researched area of pedagogy in Further Education. I believe that participant voice can helpfully complement and enhance other contributions to educational research.

Although my principal resource is the participants themselves or rather their meaningful understandings of policy and practice, in addition, my position as a Further Education insider, as lecturer, middle manager and now senior manager, with privileged access to policy and practice within my own college and the opportunity to access the work of other colleges is, I believe, a significant resource in itself; although, I am of course aware of the possible pitfalls. An important resource also is a decision to write the thesis iteratively, so as to benefit from the ways in which as MacLellan and Sodden (2003) suggest, engagement in the writing task can help transform understanding, by making our thinking available to conscious examination. Indeed, more generally Seddon (1996) suggests that the practice of research is a learning process which contributes to the process of subject or self-formation.



Although, as Ozga (2000) suggests, policy is struggled over this work takes place in the context of policy direction from the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Further Education Funding Council which is focused on managerialist concerns of securing medium term “financial security”, defined as the ability of Colleges to make sustainable financial surpluses for investment in buildings and infrastructure. As a consequence, College strategies include: collaboration in relation to support services, curriculum rationalisation, estates rationalisation, cycles of staff restructuring, increases in class sizes, reduction in face to face teaching, the employment of learning assistants and learning supervisors in place of lecturers, and merger. As an example of how this might be said to be working, an analysis of the job descriptions of lecturers and learning assistants or supervisors which I undertook, suggests that despite pay differentials ranging from £4,000 to £9,000 at the top of the scale, classroom duties were almost identical. However lecturers were paid more, valued more highly, for out-of-classroom activities such as marking, setting, preparation and development work. An additional difference was that lecturers could be asked to teach for from 22 to 24 hours per week, while learning assistants or supervisors could be teaching for up to 30 hours per week. It would be odd if in such circumstances these processes of managerialism did not have both short and long term effects on agency and culture within colleges (Ecclestone, 2002).

At the same time colleges are directed by the Scottish Executive and the Funding Council to widen access, promote lifelong learning and to sustain and improve quality, and although colleges are said to be key to the development of human capital, college funding for investment in its own staff may be squeezed. All of which may have a potentially damaging affect on culture, social relations and individual agency despite the surface appearance of team work and compliance. Thus, for example, while the focus on quality has ensured that “performativity” has been a central feature of change in Further Education Colleges, Perry (1999) claims that obsession with targets has led to high expenditure on creative accounting and divisive attributions of blame and cover up when targets are not met. Indeed the role of colleges in economic development and a consequently raised political profile may

create tensions between the need to hit targets and the need to widen access and promote social justice and inclusiveness.

While it is understood that the relationship between policy and practice is by no means simple and unidimensional, nevertheless the principal aim of this thesis is to explore the impact of the neo-liberal managerialist macro level policy agenda on assessment practices in the Scottish FE College classroom. In particular, the thesis aims to explore the relationship between the policy agenda of targets and performativity and institutional and classroom practice in the sector. I explore the relationship between learning, teaching and assessment through the methodological device of asking the principal participants – senior managers, lecturers and students – the question “What works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the Further Education College classroom?” Responses to this question enable the identification of participants’ strategies that assist students to pass assessments and analysis of these strategies allows an assessment of the extent to which participants draw on social relationships and craft skills which construct meaning and ‘transform’ knowledge or, in contrast the extent to which they are moved into compliance with a performance of the reproduction of existing knowledge. A third possibility is of course that they coexist and create dissonance for participants.

As a consequence and emerging from my principal aim I have a number of sub-aims or objectives which are illuminated by participant responses to my initial question and during subsequent interviews. These are: to explore similarities and fractures between the views of participants; to explore how learning, teaching and assessment is being shaped; to consider the implications for effective practice and the ways in which practice might be enhanced through continuous professional development (CPD), appraisal and innovation, to provide evidence based practical tools to promote classroom observation and the discussion of practice, utilising theory based language; and, to suggest further areas for research.

In summary, this thesis seeks to explore, given the policy context and with a view to making a contribution to theory, policy and practice, how learning, teaching and assessment is understood in Further Education Colleges in Scotland from the perspective of the principal participants. As we shall see, in order to do this I take the view that it may be best conceptualised as craft work, that is, through the understanding and appreciation of skill in pedagogy which develops through experience and is often implicit and difficult to categorise or pin down. I believe however that participants have this craft knowledge and my task is to help them to describe it. As we shall also see, I believe that this approach to learning and teaching may be best theorised through a constructivist perspective, which pays attention to the social setting and social relations in which learning takes place. In chapter 2, I explain what I mean by constructivism, and I identify key areas of research work in learning and teaching which fall within that broad definition and which also recognises that practitioners and students are the best sources of information on how such pedagogies work in practice. In so doing I adopt what is broadly a phenomenological, interpretivist perspective on social reality which places value on individual agency; based on individuals interpretations of the world and their actions in it.

### The Role of Assessment in Scottish Further Education

Before concluding this chapter, I think it is important that I say a little more about why at the micro level of day to day practice I think assessment might be the key to understanding classroom learning and teaching in Scottish Further Education Colleges.

Despite policy document rhetoric, the term “assessment” in further education colleges in Scotland has a particular, narrow meaning. It is normally reserved for referring to a summative process which is uncoupled from learning and teaching, the formal testing of knowledge, understanding and skills, leading to certification. Ecclestone (2002) reports a similar situation in English FE and Newton (2000) provides a summary of assessment types and purposes. The vast majority of



assessments tests in the Scottish FE system are marked by the lecturers who teach the students, using either National Assessment Bank (NAB) tests which are provided by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (the vast majority of students in Scottish FE are entered for SQA qualifications), or locally devised tests developed by college lecturers for use by themselves or their colleagues. These locally devised tests are locally moderated (subject to internal quality assurance audit), but are also subject to external audit by SQA and both nationally and locally devised tests tend to focus on narrow, atomised elements of course content in encouraging the the reproduction of knowledge. Students undertaking a one year full-time course may be required to pass up to 100 summative assessments in order to gain a nationally recognised qualification in the form of a “Named Award”. Students are allowed to attempt the same assessment (with different questions) twice, in exceptional circumstances three times and most assessment outcomes are binary, that is, students either pass or fail (usually called ‘referred’) with consequently no incentive to do more than pass. A lecturer with a class of 20 students undertaking a unit of learning over say a 12 week period, with 4 assessments, needs to arrange, mark and provide feedback on at least 80 assessments – given that all students pass first time. A lecturer with 8 classes with 20 students, would therefore have a setting, marking and feedback caseload of at least 600 plus ‘assessments’ over a 12 week period. A college with 1000 full time equivalent students might therefore have at least 100,000 assessments to manage in one year. Assessments are one of a range of key college performance indicators which are subject to both internal and external moderation (audit) and internal and external publication. As a consequence of this sheer weight of assessment, its time requirements, its continuous (perhaps continual?) nature, the reassessment rules and the type of question asked, in that they tend to require recall not application of knowledge mainly, and the ways in which assessment performance indicators are used to measure the effectiveness of individuals and colleges, it might be speculated that performativity would characterise the learning and teaching process, dominating classroom activity and squeezing out the spaces available for more creative and constructivist approaches to pedagogy. In other words assessment may in itself be a managerialist steering mechanism. I was therefore interested in the extent to which participants would confirm or deny this.

## Chapter Contents

This thesis is presented in eight chapters. Chapter 2 presents and unpacks how my research is shaped by key ideas from the literature. This is followed in chapter 3 by, at a general level, a description of the research methods which I used. This description is continued in chapters 4, 5 and 6 where I provided a detailed account of my work with the participants, and the presentation of their perspectives; chapter 4 concerns senior managers, chapter 5 lecturers and chapter 6 students. In chapter 7 I compare participants perspectives, similarities and fractures. Finally, in chapter 8, I discuss, in the light of the policy background possible implications for policy, practice and research.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

Although the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded 'Transforming Teaching and Learning Cultures' research project is now beginning to make a significant contribution to our understanding of Further Education from the view point of staff and students (Bloomer and James, 2001) further education is in general under researched (Cloonan and Turner, 2000). What research there is concentrates on patterns of participation and distribution of provision (Raab and Davidson, 1999; Surridge and Raffe, 1995; Munn, 1994), Management (Turner et al, 1997; Deem and Ozga, 1997; Ozga and Deem, 2000), Vocational Education and Training ( Raffe et al 1994, Caning, 1998; Fairly, 1998;) and further education's role in widening participation and tackling social exclusion (Gallacher et al, 2000). I was interested therefore in making a contribution through research which was based on the views of participants about learning and teaching and assessment in the classroom, which would compliment this work. I begin by providing a brief and selective review of other approaches to educational research. This is followed by consideration of the main historical antecedents of my research, in the UK schools sector. This section reviews work which views teaching as a craft and participants perspective work on learning and teaching. Following this, I look briefly at theories of learning, and then consider possible relationships between learning, teaching, assessment and managerialism. Finally, I conclude by saying what contribution I think my research makes.

#### Research on Teaching

Although, it might seem that the history of educational research could be characterised as one of changing fashion, of concentration on new questions and neglect of the older ones, a more optimistic narrative suggests that adequate understanding of teaching requires a diversity of perspectives (Brown and McIntyre,

1993). Thus, the kinds of questions which informed earlier research still continue to be asked but have been reformulated in order to accommodate other perspectives. Although, the perspective which I adopt in this thesis, is I think, a valuable way of trying to understand classroom learning, I do not thereby claim that other perspectives should be neglected or excluded.

From its 19th century beginnings until the middle of the last century “how best to teach?” was one kind of question which dominated research on teaching. This research was concerned mainly with third party observation and comparison of one or more methods of teaching. In addition, scores on attitude, personality, intelligence and attainment tests were used to characterise and identify “good” teachers, and claims were made about differences among subject teachers on the basis of these tests (Brown and McIntyre, 1993). Although from the 1960s, researchers began to ask questions about what pupils and teachers did, it was not until the 1970s that systematic observation of classroom teaching became widely recognised as an appropriate research tool, about the same time as Clark and Peterson (1986) report the beginning of the systematic study of teachers’ thinking. Elbaz (1983) for example distinguishes between teachers’ thinking about “rules of practice”, (how to behave in frequently encountered situations) “principles of practice”, (more abstract thinking base on reflection) and “images of practice” (how teaching should feel intuitively). Calderhead (1981) however suggests that such studies were premature. This is a view shared by Clark and Peterson:

*“We would suggest that before specifying a new model or revising the existing models of teacher interactive decision making, researchers should first do more descriptive research on how teachers make interactive decisions” (1986: 287).*

During the 1980s, a wide variety of theoretical perspectives were used to provide insights into teacher thinking during classroom practice. Morine – Dershimor (1990) for example suggests four alternative conceptions of what it might mean to think like a teacher. Firstly “thinking through schemata” draws on cognitive psychology and refers to the way in which teachers are said to organise large amounts of information about how to teach in any given situation. Secondly, “reflecting in and on practice”

is influenced by the work of Schön (1983). Schön describes the way in which experienced professionals are able to take decisions during practice. He does not however base any of his case studies of practitioners on classroom teachers or teaching, and although Eraut's (1994) discussion of Schön's work may be helpful, he compares teaching to riding a bike in heavy traffic in the rain (what Schön himself describes as the swampy lowland of messy, confusing problems), it is a metaphor, not a practice based description. Thirdly, "pedagogical content knowledge" as first articulated by Schulman (1986) describes the type of distinctive knowledge teachers use in combining content knowledge, knowledge of specific teaching strategies and knowledge of common misconceptions, to make content interesting and understandable to students. Lastly, "perceiving practical arguments" uses Aristotle's concept of a practical argument to describe ways in which teachers' knowledge influences their interactive teaching. As MacLellan and Sodden (2003) suggest however the problem with all of these descriptions of how teachers think is their lack of linkage to participants' day to day practice. Thus, for example, in the case of Shulman's 'pedagogical content knowledge', although he makes clear the knowledge base necessary for expert teaching, (knowledge of the domain, knowledge of potential learner confusions and misunderstandings, and knowledge of pedagogy) knowledge of how this works in practice and how students learn in practice, is largely missing from his account.

Other related perspectives include Calderhead's (1990) research in relation to ways in which teachers deal with new tasks or situations in the light of familiar and remembered situations, and the way in which teachers use images or mental pictures as ways of storing large amounts of information about teaching, and Berliner's (1987) use of a variety of simulations to encourage teachers to describe their teaching. These included; providing commentary on a lesson shown simultaneously from three different positions on TV screens, describing what they saw in a slide of a classroom scene which was shown very rapidly, and reacting to a large amount of information they were given about a class they were 'in theory' taking over.

The usefulness' of such techniques is of course not unproblematic. On the one hand, applying them 'real time' in the classroom is perhaps not feasible and on the other, while the imaginative application of selected 'laboratory' tasks can allow a focus on particular elements of practice, the implications of findings in simulated settings to actual practice is uncertain.

I was concerned therefore to base my research on participants' accounts of what is going on in the classroom and so turned to research based on practitioners perspectives.

### Participants' Perspectives on Classroom Learning and Teaching

From around the mid-1970s, researchers (Lortie, 1975; Ebel, 1976; Khol, 1976; Cohen, 1977; Martin, 1978; Wise, 1978; Desforjes and McNamara, 1977, 1979; McNamara and Desforjes, 1978) began to question the use of theories developed from other disciplines as appropriate for understanding classroom work and instead began to use the term 'craft knowledge' to describe what was going on. The term craft knowledge in relation to the classroom is usually defined as the practical knowledge about learning and teaching which participants gain through experience of day to day work, rather than through formal training. Such knowledge tends to be action orientated and not generally made explicit. Indeed it is often knowledge which participants may find difficult to articulate, or may even be unaware of using. Craft knowledge is developed through the processes of learning and teaching and is therefore a process of action, reflecting and knowledge creation.

More specifically, in relation to the craft of teaching, it is identified as an 'occupational technique' (Bensmann and Lilienfield, 1973) which can be taught (Ebel, 1976) while others see it as being as much an art as a science, if not more so, and thus has aspects which are more complex and less accessible than other crafts. Lortie (1975) for example sees craft work as work which is improved by experience and so cannot be learned in a short period of time. In the related area of child and youth care Eisikovits and Becker suggest that:



*'Craftsmanship, the work of the crafts person, is viewed as an individualistic, expressive process that can, nonetheless be taught, generally through modelling rather than academically, but with distinctive conceptual principles at the foundation. The notions of apprentice, protégé and working with a mentor fit more comfortably than those of student and teacher. Typically, the learner will produce work identifiably different from the mentor, yet clearly in harmony with it' (1983, page 96).*

Tom distinguishes the craftsperson teacher from the novice teacher by their ability to analyse teaching situations and by their broad repertoire of strategies for teaching. He suggests that acquiring craft knowledge and skill is not best done through observation and imitating.

*'The stress (is) not making the craftsperson a passive observer of skilful practice so much as it (is) on preparing (him) for (his) own active attempts to solve problems of practice' (1984 page 111).*

While such craft work is not likely to be standardised (it is more likely to be personalised) nevertheless there are likely to be certain overarching features which participants may agree upon as helpful in classroom learning and teaching. Although it is work based on this tradition which forms my principal research resource for understanding classroom practice, as will be clear, I contend however that it is not only teachers who have this knowledge, senior managers and students also have craft knowledge, which I seek to discover through the primary mechanism of my what works well question. The question is necessary because what is clear also is the difficulty participants have, particularly lecturers, in describing this day to day practice.

I start then by considering what we already think that we know about teaching strategies and how they effect learning, that is, lead to effective learning, which is perhaps a more formal way of asking what works well in helping student to learn to pass assessments in the further education college classroom? I say that we 'think' that we know, in order to emphasise the contested nature of the subject, and the sense in which this knowledge is constructed by participants.

Although, what has been written about teaching and learning constitutes a vast literature, I was interested specifically in classroom based UK research which gives primacy to the views of participants. That is, phenomenological approaches designed to attempt to understand classroom practice through the meanings assigned to them by the participants, because I wanted to explore the extent to which building on this research would allow me to compare my research with the original research and to unpack and understand the relationship between learning, teaching and assessment in the Further Education classroom in Scotland.

I started by looking at the work of Munn et al (1993), on which I based my pilot research. Munn et al were interested in exploring what teachers do to get their classes to work well and how this promoted effective classroom discipline, and as a consequence effective learning. Effective discipline is defined as the creation of an atmosphere which allows teaching and learning to take place - effective discipline is seen as an essential but not sufficient condition for learning to take place. Although they are modest in their claims, by no means are they claiming that what works well in one lesson will work well in another, they provide a framework (Appendix 1) for further research which is grounded in what teachers do, not in what they think that they ought to do, or would do in ideal circumstances. Munn et al suggest teaching can be understood as an attempt by teachers to get the class to work well by matching their goals (most prominently the achievement of normal, desirable states (NDS) - defined as the class working well, and pupil progress) to the conditions (class, age of pupils, time of day etc.) through interpretation of signs (conditions in action) and use of actions (teacher interventions). They conclude that experienced teachers are better at reading the signs and knowing what are realistic and appropriate goals to set, given the conditions at the time. The framework was arrived at by asking the main participants, teachers and pupils, what teachers do to get the class to work well. This allows Munn et al to suggest that their framework is a contribution to understanding part of the experienced teachers' craft knowledge. They suggest that craft knowledge is built up over years of experience of interpreting conditions, and that classroom events have a pattern to them albeit a complex and dynamic one. This means that getting the class to work well means different things



to different teachers and pupils at different times and in different circumstances. As Boyd and Simpson put it in discussion of their own work with teachers:

*"We expect that all the staff within each school will recognise some parts of the picture we paint, and heatedly reject others. And we also expect that what they recognise and what they reject will vary from individual to individual"* (2000; Foreword).

However, because Munn et al were concerned mainly with what works well in relation to effective discipline, I was interested also in the work of Brown and McIntyre (1993) which was primarily focused on effective teaching. Brown and McIntyre were aware of Munn et al's research and both research teams adopted a similar framework, as do Cooper and McIntyre (1996), albeit to focus on different aspects of classroom practice. Brown and McIntyre are, like Munn et al, concerned with exploring their subject from the perspective of teachers. However their subject is making sense of teaching, that is, what works well in terms of how teachers construe and define what counts as good teaching.

In common with the other research reviewed in this section, Brown and McIntyre make sense of teaching using the concept of craft knowledge and use the terms "craft knowledge" and the "craft of teaching" to describe the day to day activities of the teacher. In so doing they are however not intending to deprecate or belittle the job of teaching. Quite the reverse, the intention is to described the sense in which teaching cannot be reduced to a simple series of tasks, which can easily be learned - Carr and Kemmis (1986) make a similar point. It is instead seen as a complex creative activity learned in the classroom, on the job, over many years. Like Stenhouse (1984) for Brown and McIntyre (and for Rives, 1979) teaching is seen as an art, Stenhouse uses the analogy of the "innumerable stone masons who adorned English parish churches each one of whom display both skill and originality, not bland imitation", to describe teachers' work. Brown and McIntyre are therefore uncomfortable with the term "routine" which they use to describe day to day practice, because although "routine" is useful in exploring the idea of a process which is largely unconscious and automatic, it does not describe the complexity of the task and way in which the experienced teacher, the master craft person, applies

“action” to “goals” within the “conditions” existing at that time. At the same time however it can be argued that craft knowledge produces rules and procedures from which teachers (lecturers) and other participants generalize (Alexander et al, 1991, Galton et al, 1999)

Brown and McIntyre’s research, like Munn et al’s is distinctive because it sought to understand how teachers and pupils make sense of practice, based on everyday classroom work. At the same time, like Munn et al’s work, it was carried out in the schools sector, albeit in Scotland in the late 80s, and focused on only one aspect of the subject I was interested in. In order therefore to examine research on learning within the same overall research methodology, I turned to the work of Cooper and McIntyre (1996). Although planned as a direct follow-up to Brown and McIntyre’s work, it was distinctive in a number of ways, most importantly because of the focus on learning as opposed to teaching. Although Brown and McIntyre did not ignore learning, their emphasis was on the role of teaching in effecting it - it was teachers’ classroom thinking which was the principal focus - whereas Cooper and McIntyre take a much broader view of learning in the classroom, one which includes the role of teachers, but also focuses on the craft knowledge of pupils. In addition Cooper and McIntyre sought to generalise to another place and time, from 10 to 14 year olds in Scotland in the late 80s, to English secondary pupils in the mid 90s during the introduction of the national curriculum. In a recent conversation with Brown (November, 2003) she emphasised the importance of being able to generalise to other settings, in discussion of my attempts to discover what works well in the FE sector in Scotland in 2003/2004. As a consequence of their focus, Cooper and McIntyre elaborated Brown and McIntyre’s work from a study of teachers’ craft knowledge across a wide variety of subjects in the late primary to early secondary stages, to a study which examines two subjects only, allowing the comparison of craft knowledge within subjects, with pupils of similar ages and abilities, but importantly also attending to the bi-directionality of teachers’ and pupils’ classroom influences on one another.

These three pieces of research are quite distinctive, for the following reasons. They report on teachers' and pupils' perspectives. The focus is on teachers, and pupils own ideas of what was effective, not the observation of practice by a third party. Observation is used but as a methodological device which assists the researcher and participants to later reconstruct what happens. The research attempts to understand what teachers and pupils do routinely, by getting them to describe and explain teachers' approaches. It allows the detection of patterns, different subjects, levels, age ranges and thus allows comparisons. It is voluntary and has an emphasis on the positive, what works well?. It turns observation on its head, by getting those who are observed to describe what they think works well in creating an atmosphere which encourages learning, and defines craft knowledge. It is based around participants' own constructions, not those of the researcher, and makes explicit, taken for granted behaviour. It is "grounded" in what participants do, not what they say they would do and is non-judgmental and self evaluative, it encourages teachers and pupils to think about the craft of teaching.

My interest in the importance of participants' perspectives led me also to the work of Morgan and Morris (1999), whose research was carried out in 10 comprehensive schools in South Wales between 1992 and 1997. The schools were in catchment areas which were geographically and socially different, within both rural and urban areas and drawing children from both "deprived" and middle class areas. The pupils were between the ages of 12 and 18, of mixed ability and were roughly equal in gender split.

In their attempt to describe what contributes to what they call learning and teaching quality, Morgan and Morris asked pupils and teachers to respond to a set of questions which, like the work I have so far described, focused on the experience of the participants in the classroom. Thus pupils were asked to talk about lessons in which they learn more than others, to think about which teachers were better than others at getting them to learn and to think about best lessons, but also, and this is unlike the previous research, to describe bad lessons. For their part, teachers were asked to think about the differences between the rate at which pupils learn, to think about their

own style of teaching and to think of a lesson given recently which they thought had been excellent. Questions which as we shall see I adapted in the light of my phase 1 research findings for use in my phase 2 interviews with my participants.

My interest in the work of Morgan and Morris led me back to, the work of Benyon (1985) and Lang (1993) both of whom were interested in pupils' perspectives, the latter in particular in relation to guidance issues, and to the work of Ruddock (1996).

On the basis of more than 900 pupil interviews carried out in 3 schools over a 4 year period, Ruddock claims that:

*"our argument in this book is that what pupils say about teaching, learning and schooling is not only worth listening to but provides an important - perhaps the most important - foundation for thinking about ways of improving schools. A broad summary of what pupils have told us in interview is that while teachers are for the most part supportive, stimulating and selfless in the hours they put in to help young people, the conditions of learning that are common across secondary schools do not adequately take account of the social maturity of young people"* (Ruddock, 1996 ; 1).

In 2003, Ruddock published a further study into what had by this time come to be called pupil "voice" and the perceptions of pupils of what makes a good teacher. Ruddock was interested in the same complex range of relationship issues between teachers and pupils, which I was interested in, albeit with senior managers, lecturers and students in the FE sector, and the effects which relationships have on learning. Ruddock suggests that pupils are much more concerned about how they are treated than how they are taught, that pupils' commitment to learning is greatly assisted by having a good relationship with their teachers and resisting what she characterises as the "school work isn't cool" lobby. This is consistent with the other research which I have discussed and provides further validation and elaboration based on the views of participants about what works well in the classroom.

Finally, my research was informed also by the perceptions of classroom interaction of 98 teachers and 1350 16 to 19 year old students in 9 different FE colleges in England, elicited using a questionnaire developed initially by Wubbles et al (1993) as

part of The Oxford Brookes University Communication Styles Project (Harkin and Davis, 1996a, 1996b; Harkin and Turner, 1997; Harkin, Davis and Turner, 1998; Harkin, Turner and Dawn, 2000; Hockley and Harkin, 2000). In a review of this work, Harkin (2001) suggests that effective teaching appears to require a blend of behaviours which he describes as 'leadership'. The most important element being affect - knowing students names, sharing a joke, spending 'informal' time with students; treating them with respect; consulting and responding to their views - blended with an emphasis on high standards; arriving on time; displaying subject knowledge; being prepared; marking fairly; and giving adequate feedback.

### What do we think that we already know about learning?

There is of course a large and familiar tradition of research into student learning (Donovan, Bransford and Pellegrino: 1999). One view of learning is that it is simply about individuals knowing more than they previously did. However, on the basis that understanding knowledge is better than just collecting knowledge but the latter may now matter more in terms of assessment success in further education college classrooms, I was keen to base my research around a theory of learning which would allow me to explore the extent to which learning in further education might be characterised as 'simply' technocratic. That is, that it is concerned mainly with the learning of facts, which are left uncontested, validated by their assessment, so that more comes to mean better. As Bloomer and James put it:

*"The technical rational approach typically breaks complex knowledge down into constituent parts and has the learner learn, rehearse and reproduce knowledge in more or less the form it was consumed."* (2001, page 3).

There are many different theories of learning but I briefly discuss here three main categories: behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism.

Arising in the 1920s and 1930s from attempts to model the study of learning on methods developed in the physical sciences, behaviourism suggests that behaviour is associated in an invariant and mechanistic way with specific stimuli. That is, that a



certain stimulus will cause a particular response and that through systems of reward or punishment it is possible to reinforce the association between a particular response and a particular event (or stimulus). Skinner (1969) for example, uses the term “operant conditioning” to describe the way in which pigeons could, through the reward of pellets of food, be “trained” to carry out relatively complex tasks. Skinner suggests also that remote stimulus can be linked to more complex behaviour through intervening stimuli, and that the withdrawal of existing rewards or punishments and their replacement with new rewards or punishments can change behaviour. The belief that “invariant” principles, which are independent of conscious control, govern what is learned, underpins behaviourism. Human behaviour is thus seen as largely predictable and controllable.

While behaviourism largely denies or ignores mental activity as the basis of learning, cognitivists suggest that human learning depends on internal and conscious representations of the world, mental processing and conscious thought. Fontana summarises the cognitive approach.

*“The cognitive approach holds that if we are to understand learning we cannot confine ourselves to observable behaviour, but must also concern ourselves with the learner’s ability mentally to reorganise his psychological field (i.e. his inner world of concepts, memories, etc) in response to experience. This latter approach therefore lays stress not only on the environment, but upon the way in which the individual interprets and tries to make sense of the environment. It sees the individual not as the somewhat mechanical product of his environment, but as an active agent in the learning process, deliberately trying to process and categorise the stream of information fed to him by the external world.” (1981, page 148).*

Key concepts are therefore the search for meaning and consistency in linking new information to previous knowledge. (Bates and Poole, 2003).

Building on this, a constructivist epistemological position however emphasises the development of personal meaning through reflection, analysis and construction of knowledge. Thus each of us generate our own mental models which allow us to make sense of our experiences.

Constructivist accounts of learning (Piaget, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978; Lave, 1988; Resnick, 1989; Lave and Wenger, 1990; Von Glaserfeld, 1995) suggest that learning is filtered and constructed through existing beliefs and knowledge but that instead of being detached from the external world, learning is situated within particular contexts and cultures. Piaget (1977) suggests that the process of knowledge construction is self regulating, that is, that individuals seek orderliness and predictability in their understanding of the world. As a consequence, things which do not fit this world view cause a state of “dis-equilibrium”, triggering learning, whereby individuals adapt their concepts and so achieve cognitive balance, ‘re-equilibrium’ or ‘accommodation’. Learning is simply the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences. The real purpose of learning therefore becomes the construction of meaning, not just the memorisation of ‘correct answers’ and the regurgitation of someone else’s meaning. Meaningful learning or learning for understanding may also be characterised as being concerned with sensitively and systematically thinking about and with what is being learned by making thinking visible and by being alert to the circumstances which invite thinking rather than the passive acceptance of them (Perkins, 2005). In discussing learning and teaching for understanding within Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Perkins describe his work and that of his colleagues, in the following terms:

*“We ask not only how well do people think once they get going but how disposed are they in the first place to pay attention to the other side of the case, question the evidence, look beyond obvious possibilities, and so on. Our findings argue that everyday thinking may suffer more from just plain missing the opportunities than from poor skills” (2005; 1).*

In order however to better understand the importance of constructivism to my research it is important to distinguish between what Von Glaserfeld (1995) calls “trivial” and “radical” constructivism. Although both, like learning within cognitivist accounts, suggest that learning is peculiar to the individual, within trivial constructivism individuals build their knowledge from ‘pre-existent facts’, while within radical constructivist accounts there is no absolute, objective reality “out there” waiting to be discovered. All understandings are therefore personal and

idiosyncratic. Thus, while within trivial constructivism true reality exists independently of the individual person, within radical constructivism it is the individual who actually invents reality, whereby 'truth' is replaced by ways of knowing. Knowing involves understanding reality as experience and knowledge is constructed by the individual. However, even for radical constructivists, existing theories and concepts are helpful because they assist us to explain our world, they are not separate entities of an objective world, but concepts which we can use to construct a reality and make predictions about the world.

The contradiction between trivial and radical constructivism, in epistemological terms whether or not a true reality exists independently of people, can be reconciled however through social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978; Lave, 1988; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Within social constructivism, learning is a dialectic process grounded within a system of social relations and not a matter of solitary individual construction of understanding. Thus, although we can have no certain knowledge of the world "out there" we can have shared access to shared understandings of the world through social situations like, for example, the communities of practice within college courses and the workplace. The creation of communities of practice, defined as groups of individuals who have an interest in developing shared understandings of meanings is a key idea within social constructivism (Gipps, 1992; Seeley Brown and Duguid, 1996; Black and William, 1998). Reality is thus, always tentative and dynamic and because ideas are tested within social situations, for example, through discussion with peers and others, they are also not value free, and because learning is seen as a social process, although technology can facilitate it, it requires communication between, for example, students and between students and lecturers, lecturers and lecturers, and so on. At the same time, although knowledge is socially constructed each person is still seen as unique, because each individual's experience and search for personal meaning is different. The extent to which learning and teaching is based on 'trivial' or 'radical' constructivism in Scottish FE College classrooms and the extent to which students individualise knowledge may therefore be key to our understanding of the effects of assessment.



## Relationships between Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Managerialism

Despite our conceptualisations of how individuals learn, there remains a significant gap between what is known about learning and how we should teach.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the terms “learning” and “teaching” continue to be used unproblematically, and the relationship between them is often left unexplored by government and the polity; in policy and guidance documents; by the media and the public; and by education managers, by lecturers and teachers and by pupils and students. And what works well in assisting human learning in classrooms (teaching) what counts as “learning”, and what counts as “effective” remains contested. To paraphrase Lave’s and Wenger’s (1990) mischievous suggestion, I am not saying that where there is teaching there is no learning. It is however by no means clear what the relationship is. Indeed, what is clear is that there can be learning without teaching and teaching without learning. More specifically, we continue to be unsure about what works well in the classroom, in relation to effective learning and teaching, in general, and most certainly in the more restricted area of the Scottish Further Education college classroom in particular. Cockburn (1995: 76) answers her own question “what goes on in the classroom in the name of learning?” with the response “we still do not know” and nearly a decade on we remain equally vague, despite the claims of Muijs and Reynolds (2001) to the contrary.

Conceptualisations of teaching as craft knowledge and learning as a constructivist process however allow us purchase on understanding what is going on in the further education college classroom and the links between them may be operationalised through the assessment process. Understanding the process of assessment may allow us to understand better the definitions of learning and teaching which are being used by participants in describing day to day practice.

From a constructivist viewpoint it might be suggested that lecturers and students should together, within their community of practice be creating a culture of enquiry aimed at developing deep and flexible understanding (Newton, 2000) and deep

approaches to learning (Entwistle, 2000, 2003). In so doing, lecturers require to support students through systems of knowledge “scaffolding” (Vygotsky, 1978) which allow them to create understandings which link previous knowledge to new knowledge. Of course individual learners may require individualised scaffolding support, Kolb (1973) describes the different learning styles which learners may adopt, and it needs to be clear whether students are being expected to arrive at personal meaning through socially constructed understandings or to simply link previously acquired knowledge to “pre-existing truth”. It would of course be possible to use constructivism for instrumental purposes. Breen (2001) suggests that the social construction of knowledge is by no means unproblematic and that students may conspire with lecturers to maintain harmony without “challenging the surface text” and that in some classrooms this may cause students to underachieve and certainly fail to develop personal meanings.

Unfortunately also, constructivism is a theory of learning, not a description of teaching. It does however describe ways of challenging learners to understand, rather than accumulate knowledge; to reconstruct it and transform it, to challenge it and arrive at new meanings. If, as Muijs and Reynolds (2001) suggest, teaching is the promotion of learning, it is important to clarify what view of learning is being promoted and indeed how it is being promoted. Paradoxically a radical view of constructivism suggests that providing constructivist teaching methodology in pre-digested form is problematic since methodology needs to be constructed and given personal meaning by individual lecturers, albeit within a community of practice. It suggests the need for constructivist approaches to learning which privilege learning for understanding, and assessment strategies which value and reward understanding, rather than the accumulation and regurgitation of discrete pieces of information.

As a consequence, I was interested in exploring how assessment is driving teaching and learning in Scottish FE Classrooms, using managerialism, craft knowledge and constructivism as theoretical lenses. Ecclestone (2002) for example reports that within the NVQ programmes in the English further education colleges she studied assessment was mainly diagnostic and summative and this encouraged students and

lecturers to work together to 'get students through' by collecting and reproducing 'facts'. Newton (2000) distinguishes between 3 types of assessment - formative, diagnostic and summative. Formative assessment is designed to determine students' current state of knowledge and to identify gaps, allowing opportunity for further support and scaffolding to be provided. Diagnostic assessment is used, as the name suggests, to diagnose causes of failure and take remedial action, while summative assessment is used to give evidence of a students' level of learning or knowledge usually for the purposes of certification. Of course, all 3 types of assessment provide the opportunity for lecturers to assist the learner but do not in themselves suggest what form of assistance should be provided or what model of learning is being promoted and although, within all 3 assessment types, there is clearly the opportunity for constructivist approaches to understanding to be promoted through lecturer intervention, understanding the assessment process and its purposes is key to understanding what sort of learning and teaching models are valued by participants. An assessment system which values the reproduction of pieces of knowledge is more likely to encourage student approaches to learning and lecturer approaches to teaching which are superficial and technocratic. (Marton and Saljo, 1976; Biggs, 1987, Volet and Chalmers, 1992; Andrews et al, 1994; Entwistle, 2000; 2003). Entwistle, for example, discusses the link between students' approaches to learning and motivational drivers, including assessment and suggests that students adopt a deep or surface approach to learning, depending upon among other things, what is valued in the assessment process. Lastly, of course, I have theorised learning, teaching and assessment in the context of neo-liberal managerialism. My thesis is therefore informed by conceptions of how this may be affecting classroom work from the perspective of the principal participants. Although space does not permit a fuller discussion, in addition to the participant perspective work I have already discussed, a social policy perspective suggests that although it is not claimed that there was some sort of Keynesian golden age of education within the welfare state, managerialism may have emotional, social and pedagogical consequences for teachers (lecturers) managers and students which have altered work cultures and normative values. (Lawn, 1996; Gewirtz, 1997; Ball, 1998; Gewirtz, 2001).

### What contribution does my research make?

Within this chapter I have not of course attempted to provide a comprehensive review of the literature on learning, teaching and assessment. I have instead tried to describe the theory and research context within which my own research should be understood. I have highlighted a number of features of that research context. Firstly, that my research builds on what we already know about the subject, based on UK research over the past 15 years, in schools. Secondly, that although recent research has led to a better understanding of the crafts of the classroom, inconsistencies, shortcomings and gaps remain in relation in particular to knowledge of the FE Sector in Scotland and the effects of policy drivers. Thirdly, that although there are a rich variety of theoretical ideas available for describing our understanding of classroom learning and teaching, research which gives voice to participants is still relatively under-represented, although more recent work has begun to reassert its democratic and transformative possibilities, while warning of the dangers of 'fadism' and manipulative incorporation (Fielding, 2004).

My purpose is to build on the earlier school-based research work which I have described but of course within the scope of a doctoral thesis, I could not hope to achieve what had been achieved with large research teams over periods ranging from 3 to 5 years, especially in terms of personal observation of practice. Nevertheless, my strategy is influenced by the school-based work in that I planned to employ the following methods. Firstly, emphasising what was good about teaching. That is, what works well in the eyes of the principal participants, senior managers, lecturers and students. Secondly, focusing in the case of lecturers and students on specific classroom events. Thirdly, avoiding the imposition on the participants of any preconceptions about good teaching. Fourthly, using the principal participants and other practitioners to validate the data. Lastly, exploring the extent to which policy, including policy on assessment, seems to be driving learning and teaching practice and vice versa.

However, I believe my research to offer the following distinctive contribution.

Firstly, it is based on qualitative research work in 4 Scottish further education colleges. Secondly, in addition to the new perspective offered by lecturers and students, as opposed to teachers and pupils, it offers the views of senior FE managers, as participants in the learning process. Thirdly, it takes place up to 15 years after the work I am building upon, within a changing economic and policy context. It is informed also by my relatively unique perspective as a former school teacher, further education lecturer and senior manager in the further education sector. (I am of course aware also of possible problems and pitfalls in terms of so called objectivity. I rely therefore upon being as explicit as I can be about what I did, a form of what Harding (1987) calls "hard objectivity"). And my position as an insider and senior manager, adopting an action orientation, although the timescale and degree assessment requirements may inhibit the type of fully democratic, participatory and emancipatory process described in the literature (Elliot, 1993; Somekh, 1995), gives me the opportunity to explore the extent to which it may be possible to involve FE participants in developing policy and procedure which emerge from their practice. Lastly, it utilises the adoption of craft knowledge approaches to understanding teaching, and constructivist approaches to understanding learning within a further education context.



## CHAPTER 3

### Research Methods

#### Introduction

In this chapter I describe at a general level in line with my research plan (Appendix 2), the research methods which I employed in order to gain access to the valid and authentic views of my participants. A more detailed account of my work with the individual groups of participants is provided in chapters 4, 5 and 6. An overarching concern was to develop methods which might be used to effect change at the micro level of classroom practice and at the meso level of college policy should practitioners choose to adopt and adapt them.

Given my theorisation of learning and teaching as a craft, best conceptualised from managerialist and constructivist perspectives, my ontological standpoint, which is informed by my pilot work and by a review of the research literature, data were gathered in two phases from four Scottish FE colleges; one being one of the largest in the sector, one medium size and two smaller, covering the greater part of the FE curriculum and comprising around 10% of Scottish FE student activity during academic year 2003/2004. The four colleges work together on a variety of collaborative curriculum and support service projects. Indeed, as the research was taking place, two of the colleges signed a Memorandum of Agreement at Board level committing the colleges to “closer working relationships” and another of the colleges signed a similar agreement with a non-participating college. The research underpinning this thesis builds on curriculum development work across the 4 colleges and a shared concern to enhance learning and teaching through observation of classroom practice – practice based evidence, leading to evidence based practice.

In order to explore participants’ views, I adopted what is essentially an action ‘orientation’ in that I involved the participants at each stage. But I do not claim that I was involved in action research. However I attempted to think about, design and carry out an investigation that encouraged practitioners to think about existing ways

of working and existing policy (Ozga, 2000). Although, my work is firmly within the qualitative research tradition, for the phase 1 data I adopted a modified phenomenological approach which although grounded in participants' perspectives used quantitative methods for data presentation, while not contradicting the overall orientation. My position, however, remains as presented in chapter 1. I believe that, rather than their being a world which is 'out there' and is objectively knowable, empirically testable and independent of people, that phenomena are best understood through the meanings assigned to them by individuals based on their experience. In organizing the data as I did, however, I do not believe that I have cut across these assumptions because the data remains grounded in my participants' perceptions.

As we have seen, a wish to compliment "third-party" descriptions, discussions and definitions of what helps students to learn and teachers to teach led me to look for accounts which would underpin and validate my own view that if we are to understand more about how students learn and teachers teach and what works well for them, it is possible that we might find answers in the "grounded" perspectives of participants, which compliment and extend research based on simulations of practice, theoretical perspectives from other academic disciplines and third party observations. Although, Bechhofer and Paterson (2000) criticise the way in which "Grounded Theory" (Glasser and Strauss, 1967) is often quoted but seldom examined, I am here using the term "grounded" to denote the use of down to earth, pragmatic descriptions of participants day to day activity in the classroom to drive theory. Thus, although the perspective I have adopted on learning, teaching and assessment is theorised by managerialism which forms a framework and identified issues for me to explore, nevertheless my enquiry is grounded in participants experiences. I was interested, therefore, in attempting to get behind participants perceptions of performance in order to explore how they feel about the processes of learning, teaching and assessment and the extent to which authentic social relationships characterised classroom interaction. Grounded theory is explicitly emergent, that is, it sets out what accounts for the research situation, as it is, from the participants' perspective. At the heart of the process is the constant comparison of data, data sorting and category saturation (Silverman, 2000). In seeking to understand my participants'

perceptions, I deliberately chose a grounded approach and an action orientation, allowing the picture to emerge inductively.

The following protocol adapted from Morgan and Morris (1999) underpins the research:

- **Anonymity.** Colleges are guaranteed institutional anonymity in the use of the information I obtain, as also are the individual students, lecturers and managers involved.
- **Purpose.** The research involves collecting information about the classroom work of students and lecturers. The focus is on strengths, there is no attempt to identify weaknesses.
- **Ethics.** The research is not concerned in any way with the appraisal of particular individuals or the assessment of the work of any “department” in a college. The research does not focus on individual people or, indeed, on any individual college. The essential purpose of the project is to bring together information which might illuminate and describe the role of assessment and its effects on learning and teaching.
- **Confidentiality.** No information given in answers to questions during interviews will be attributed; nor will any information deriving from answers to questions be presented in such a way that could identify the source of any statement. The intention is that the information obtained from interviews will be aggregated for analysis and presented in ways intended to be of help to FE students, lecturers and managers generally.

Following an initial letter to the Principals of the four participating colleges (Appendix 3) followed by a presentation to them, which emphasised the benefits of participation which I felt might emerge for their college and staff, I ‘established’ a contact within each of the colleges. This was someone who would assist me in the process of gaining and maintaining access at senior manager, student and lecturer

level. I was aware from my pilot work that it is important to gain the confidence of “opinion leaders” in seeking and maintaining access to participants. My college contacts had therefore to be respected insiders who were capable of encouraging colleagues and students to get involved and remain committed. They were both gatekeepers and my central point for communication, arranging meetings with staff and students, and speaking for the project if things became difficult or other priorities emerged. They had therefore to be senior enough to get things done, while at the same time being trusted by colleagues and students alike. As a result, I sounded out existing colleagues (including one within my own college) with whom I had already worked and who I knew could “get the job done”, before I spoke to the Principals. All of this took place 6 months prior to starting my research work, confirming the type of timescales necessary in gaining sustainable access. Indeed, the process of gaining access within my own college was not entirely unproblematic where as a consequence of Board decisions around this time the Principal was cautious about seeking staff involvement. More generally, gaining access to undertake research in your own workplace may be as difficult or even more difficult than gaining access outwith it and can certainly not be taken for granted, particularly if the topic is sensitive or if the outcome may lead to significant change (Butler and Landells, 1995).

The detail of my further interaction with senior managers, with named contacts, with students and with staff is described in turn in the chapters which follow. Examples of supporting documentation are presented in the Appendix (Appendix 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12). I was however very conscious at each stage of what I had learned from my pilot work about the essential fragility of such relationships, and that ‘access’ needs not just to be sought but also maintained in order to help collect authentic, reliable and valid data. I was therefore at pains always to work hard at the relationships involved, particularly in relation to anonymity and confidentiality. Meetings with staff and students took place as far as possible at lunch times, with lunch provided, or over coffee, and with time for informal discussion before and after the main business was concluded. I was conscious also of the need to stress what the colleges and individual participants might gain from the process in terms of

sustainable policy and practice, and that I would be basing my work entirely around views of what participants' think what works well – not what works badly. This seemed particularly important in the policy context, which I described earlier, and in terms of trying to get participants to let me have valid and authentic responses which were not influenced by “theory” or defensive reactions.

As indicated earlier, the research was conducted in two linked phases. Although feedback on my research proposal suggested that my sample sizes might be over large, in phase 1 of the research, I planned because I was aware of possible attrition rates through my pilot work to seek from the four colleges the views of 8 senior managers – 2 from each college – 24 lecturers – 6 from each college and 200 students – 50 from each college – to the question “What works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the further education college classroom?” This proved to be a wise precaution in that my actual sample sizes were respectively 6, 15 and 134, although as we shall see in the case of students and lecturers these numbers are augmented by responses to my pilot study. In my pilot study 98 students and 9 lecturers responded to the question “What works well in helping students to learn” elicited at the macro level very similar responses. Participants responses were derived from a straightforward proforma as described within the appropriate chapters and the “data collection instruments” are presented in the Appendix (Appendix 13, 14 and 15).

Following data analysis and validation processes involving the participants, as I describe below, in phase 2, I planned to interview 4 managers – 1 from each college – 12 lecturers – 3 from each college and 20 students – 5 from each college – in focus groups, using a semi-structured interview process, based on my findings from phase 1, although as we shall see, problems with access in one of the colleges meant that lecturer and student interviews in that college could not go ahead.

The use of both written responses and interviews were intended to allow me to benefit from the strengths of both. I used written responses in phase 1 in acknowledgement of research evidence (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987; Langer and



Applebee 1987; Wells, 2002) that writing can enable a more sophisticated description, by transforming earlier understandings; an appropriately constructivist method, given my theorisation of learning within the thesis. Indeed, as indicated earlier, my whole approach to my thesis was to write it iteratively, rather than waiting until I had collected all the data, so as to benefit from the transformations in my understandings which this might effect, and of course in thinking about and discussing perceptions of learning with participants, I was keenly aware of my own learning preferences and meta-cognitive activity.

In phase 2, I used interviews to validate and to probe further the written responses from phase 1. Indeed, analysis of my phase 1 data was designed to allow me to adopt a semi-structured approach to questions in phase 2, while ensuring that the questions were open, giving participants the opportunity to share their views within an interactive discussion. This was to be further facilitated by using focus group interviews. In the event however, in the case of senior managers, I had to use individual interviews for logistical reasons. Bechofer and Paterson (2000) discuss the pros and cons of interviews and in chapters 4, 5 and 6 I discuss the specific methods I deployed.

In line with my grounded approach, data from both phase 1 and 2 were analysed using what Silverman (2000: page 179) describes as the constant comparative method, whereby:

- A sample of responses was read;
- Points of similarity and difference were noted;
- Categories were generated: these categories were then tested against a new set of responses;
- New categories were then generated and tested against responses already analysed;
- All existing categories were carried forward to new responses; and
- The process was repeated until all responses have been examined and all categories tested against responses.

Despite my recognition of the need to provide access to the richness of participants' views, I was aware that there were difficulties in trying to do this. Ball (1981) reminds us that second order constructs and categories can reify and simplify the actual meaning and perspectives held. I have therefore tried throughout to use quotes to exemplify participants' views, although obviously I have had to exercise choice over what to use and omit, and because I did not aim to provide a grounded, fully ethnographic account.

Following initial analysis, the categories produced from the phase 1 data were then further "collapsed" into manageable sized "constructs" and were grouped and presented in tables, whereas the findings from the phase 2 data were used to provide a grounded narrative. I use the term 'produced' because as Dey (1993) suggests whatever the method employed, data is produced, it is not out there waiting to be collected like bags of rubbish. The "constructs" were used to provide conclusions and recommendations matched against the thesis aims. At each stage these were presented to and discussed with staff, student and senior manager participants and non-participants as part of the validation process. Specifically, what I did was to give copies of my analyses to the college contacts and ask them to let participants and non-participants see them and pass comments back to me. In addition, I passed copies to a colleague in a non-participating college but within the Further Education Research Network (FERRN) and sought comment there also. Following this, I also sought comment on draft versions of the chapters, where my findings are discussed. I also took the opportunity to present my data, methods and findings to 3 separate audiences - my Ed.D colleagues, an HMIe "Best Practice" seminar and a FERRN seminar. Silverman (2000) describes the benefits of presenting to different audiences, which of course centres upon the transformations in understandings which such opportunities afford the researcher. Indeed the main beneficiary may be the researcher.

The relatively recent pervasive use of email in FE colleges in Scotland has greatly facilitated the ease with which research findings can be shared and comments sought

- a resource not available to my predecessors. Getting feedback on findings is not easy, a difficulty confirmed by Pamela Munn (Munn et al, 1993) in discussion of her work with myself and although I did not get a large number of responses, what I got in response to phase 1 findings, I was able to follow up in my phase 2 interviews. The what I have called "reliability and validity review documentation" is presented in the Appendix (Appendix 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22). Although it might have been better to have tried to involve the participants in the initial task of categorisation, it quickly became apparent that owing to logistical and confidentiality issues this was a task I would have to complete, despite the emphasis I have put on the importance of participants constructs of "what works well?" Brown and McIntyre (1993) report a similar trade-off between the ideal and the practical.

Throughout the thesis I keep returning to a "how typical question". How typical were the colleges? How typical were the students? – and so on. This is another way of asking how generalisable or representative my findings might be. This is of course a familiar question in research but there are particular problems in qualitative, phenomenological work where there is a concern to understand individuals' perceptions of the world, rather than to be able to say that if 'X' happens 'Y' will also happen on all occasions and in all circumstances. The latter which typifies scientific positivism is described by Bassey in the following way:

*"This is a general statement that, in effect, states that anyone, anytime, anywhere, who treats the same ingredients in the same way that I did, will make the same chemical compound. It is what I later termed an 'open generalisation' (Bassey 1981; 79), Stenhouse (1978) called a 'predictive generalisation', and Hammersley (1992;91) a 'theoretical inference'. What intrigues me now is that this generalisation was based on a study of a singularity! My activity over 24 hours in a laboratory in Central London in 1955 was, I believe legitimately, extrapolated to anyone, anytime, anywhere. Within the positivist paradigm of physical science this was, and is, acceptable. (2001, page 2)*

Given the complexity of the social world such a state of affairs is of course highly improbable. In the world of the classroom, time of day, time of year, subject content, different student groups, different lecturers, different colleges, different personal mood and so on will have their affect on the process (Munn et al, 1992; Brown and

McIntyre, 1993; Cooper and McIntyre, 1996). This is why in qualitative work Bassey (2000) suggests that we need to use what he calls 'fuzzy generalisations' or 'best estimate of trustworthiness' (BET) statements of the type, do X in Y circumstances and Z may happen. Indeed Bassey prefers the term 'relatability' rather than 'generalisability'. In discussing case studies he suggests that:

*"an important criterion for judging the merit of a case study is the extent to which the details are sufficient and appropriate for a teacher working in a similar situation to relate his decision making to that described in the case study. The relatability of a case study is more important than its generalisability"* (1981, page 85).

He considers that if case studies:

*"are carried out systematically and critically, if they are aimed at the improvement of education, if they are relatable, and if by publication of the findings they extend the boundaries of existing knowledge, then they are valid forms of educational research."* (1981, page 86).

A successful study will provide the reader with a three-dimensional picture and will illustrate relationships, micropolitical issues and patterns of influences in a particular context. (Bell, 1987).

I was therefore as interested in presenting a detailed, grounded picture, as I was in being able to say something about all Scottish FE colleges, or other colleges in the UK or other sectors of education. At the same time I did not want to present a picture which was idiosyncratic and highly untypical, either in the sense that my sample did not represent well the colleges involved in my research or that my sample did not represent well the sector. As Mason puts it:

*"I do not think qualitative researchers should be satisfied with producing explanations which are idiosyncratic or particular to the limited empirical parameters of their study ... qualitative research should (therefore) produce explanations which are generalisable in some way or have a wider resonance"* (1996, page 6).

Any claims for the authenticity of qualitative research may however reside less in

conventional notions of representativeness and more in the qualitative complexities of a small sample (Gleeson and Shain, 1999).



## CHAPTER 4

### **The Scottish Policy Context, the Colleges and their Senior Managers: what works well?**

#### Introduction

This chapter starts with a brief look at the specific policy context of FE in Scotland, including an examination of the ways in which managerialist steering mechanisms such as inspection, audit and the publication of performance indicators (PIs) are used to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of colleges and their senior managers. This is followed by consideration of the extent to which the 4 research colleges were typical. I then focus, in the light of the policy context, on the perspectives of senior managers within the 4 colleges. Firstly, in discussing their response to the phase 1 question “What works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the FE classroom?” and secondly, in discussing their responses to the phase 2 interview questions.

#### The Scottish Policy Context

As I indicated in chapter 1, I believe it is important to understand events within their policy context. I was interested, therefore, in the ways in which neo-liberal managerialism might be affecting day to day practice in colleges, although as indicated earlier I do not thereby suggest that there is a simple, uni-dimensional relationship between policy and practice. As Ball suggests:

*“... we can see policies as representations which are encoded in complex ways (via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations) and decoded in complex ways (via actors’ interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experience, skills, resources and context).” (1994, page 16).*

Or as Codd puts it:

*"A policy is both contested and changing, always in a state of becoming, of was and never was and not quite; for any text a plurality of readers must necessary produce a plurality of readings." (1998, page 239).*

Although Ozga (1998) suggests that managerialism may have invidious effects in creating 'colluded' identities and on social relationships in the workplace, she suggests also that the significance and extent of divergence between what she terms 'travelling' policies and local versions of policy in the overarching project of the modernization of education is not clear and that readings of policy which draw attention to policy convergence may underplay the resource which other more local 'collective narratives' may offer, and that in particular, this may be the case in Scotland (Ozga, 2005). In addition, of course at the individual level, although the colluded self is colonised, others may show their agency through resistance to the effects of managerialism and continue to try to work in genuinely collegiate ways. Nevertheless, although this "policy as contestation" or as Ozga (2000) puts it "contested terrain" view suggests that there is space for individual interpretation of policy and interpretation of interpretation, in that policy is not delivered in tablets of stone to a grateful or quiescent population, it might be argued that the sheer weight and direction of neo-liberal managerialist inspired policy has been hegemonic to the extent that the space for individual college, or individual agency initiative has been squeezed. I was anticipating therefore that senior managers would be more policy aware and perhaps compliant, and that lecturers and students would be more affected by the specific operation of performance management and measurement on their day to day work in the classroom.

Since they were incorporated, Scottish Further Education Colleges have been subject to both policy consistency and policy change. Thus, for example, current policy direction in relation to collaboration, rationalisation and consensual merger, replaces previous policy direction whereby merger was more likely to have arisen as the result of vigorous competition. At the same time, especially since the election of New Labour in 1997, monitoring of college performance indicators has grown and developed, most recently by including so called "soft indicators" within the scope of

HMle review, (HMle, 2004) reflecting ‘third-way’ (Giddens, 1998) concerns with social justice, inclusion and widening access, and such change may therefore on balance may be read as congruent with neo-liberalism rather than a turn away from it. In what follows, I set my discussion of the perceptions of senior managers within their policy context, starting with the issue of merger.

Despite predictions when Scottish FE Colleges were incorporated in 1993, by academic year 2003/04 there were still the same number of independent institutions. Unlike the position in England, although encouraged by the publication of policy direction like the Scottish Further Education Funding Council’s (SFEFC) Area Mapping Reports (SFEFC, 2002) which identified FE market gaps and encouraged closer collaboration between colleges broadly within Local Enterprise Company (LEC) boundaries, various flirtations with merger had been unsuccessful. Further Area Mapping Reports were published in draft form by SFEFC in 2004 (SFEFC, 2004) but this time including all post 16 provision - universities, schools, private providers and community based provision, in addition to FE college provision. Earlier, SFEFC Circular FE08/2001 (SFEFC, 2001) provided guidance to colleges on the “Council’s Approach to Encouraging Collaboration and Rationalisation between Colleges”.

So, where does the strategy of “Collaboration and Rationalisation” come from, and why now? Circular FE/08/01 for example claims that:

*“Collaboration and Rationalisation is required in order to better meet needs, to achieve improvements in efficiency, and to promote excellence”; and “to stimulate appropriate responses to Scotland’s future needs, e.g. the need for a modern knowledge economy and a new digital age, and the consequential changes in the skills needed for sustainable employment within a competitive global economy”. (2001, paragraph 4).*

And that:

*“Collaboration and Rationalisation can, where the circumstances are right, achieve the following:*

- *Improvements in planning provision;*
- *Removal of a deficit between need or demand and supply;*
- *Improvements in quality of provision;*
- *Improved value for public money.” (2001, paragraph 8)*

The Circular then goes on to describe the Council’s approach to “encouraging collaboration and rationalisation between colleges” and describes 3 options:

*“Doing the minimum - **reactive mode**; deciding a blueprint for the size and shape of the sector - **planning mode**; or identifying the key strategic issues and possible options for action and encouraging the sector to address these issues - **pro-active steering mode**”. (2001, paragraph 11).*

“Pro-active steering” does not mean what it might at first sight be taken to mean – it means that the colleges are to be “pro-active”. Although the document stresses the preference for adopting a “pro-active steering mode”, where “all parties willingly enter negotiations and identify the benefits for change for their own institution, rather than change being imposed”, it goes on to say that the “planning mode” (where change is initiated by SFEFC itself) will be used where necessary for unspecified “strategic reasons”. For example, in discussion of further education provision in Glasgow, it is said that this

*“has led some commentators (unidentified) to ask whether there is any unnecessary duplication of provision in the area and to question the need for all these colleges to remain independent corporate bodies.” (2001, paragraph 21)*

What the Funding Council appears to want however is for colleges to enter into merger talks apparently consensually.

By the time I was in the process of completing my thesis, one merger had taken place and significant progress towards merger has been achieved in other areas of Scotland. Indeed three of the research Colleges had entered into very positive and extensive consultation and consultancy exercises on future collaboration options including the possibility of the creation of “new entities” using the merger mechanism. The effect of such processes on the lived realities (Ball et al, 2000) of

individual staff are real and tangible, allowing space for contestation within limited boundaries. That is of course not to say that merger is a bad thing, there may be significant benefits for a staff and students, but to reflect that the process may cause resistance, legitimate or otherwise, particularly where financial pressures which may lead to staff redundancy, further changes to contracts of employment and workloads, is one of the main reasons for merger. Welsh and Frost (2000) discuss the effects on individuals, their identities and motives, of the reorganization of secondary schooling in England in the late 1980's and suggest that public agendas were often undermined by a range of behind the scenes manoeuvring and artifice.

Although merger might be seen as one of the direct effects of neo-liberal policy direction, more generally, in the decade since incorporation, colleges have experienced significant growth both in student participation rates and range of programmes, and have changed dramatically in their management and governance structures. In academic year 2001/02 (Scottish Executive, 2003a) there were just under 515,000 student enrolments across the sector, a 70% increase compared with the position at Incorporation. A detailed breakdown is provided in Table 2.1.

**Table 4.1 National figures for student enrolments by gender, level and mode of attendance: 2001/2002.**

	Further Education			Higher Education			All students		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Full-time	22,210	23,003	<b>45,213</b>	12,925	14,695	<b>27,620</b>	35,135	37,698	<b>72,833</b>
Part-time	165,222	240,234	<b>405,456</b>	16,858	19,654	<b>36,512</b>	182,080	259,888	<b>441,968</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>187,432</b>	<b>263,237</b>	<b>450,669</b>	<b>29,783</b>	<b>34,349</b>	<b>64,132</b>	<b>217,215</b>	<b>297,586</b>	<b>514,801</b>

At Incorporation in 1993, colleges were initially funded direct by the Scottish Office (SOED then SOEID). In 1999, however, SFEFC was created on the recommendation of the Garrick Committee. SFEFC is directed in terms of strategy



by the Scottish Executive Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (not Education), effectively providing a mechanism for government to shape the sector through funding mechanisms, while at the same time being able to transfer responsibility to the Funding Council and the colleges for any shortcomings. A recent Scottish Parliament Audit Committee report criticising SFEFC for failing to improve the financial health of the sector is an example (Scottish Parliament 2004).

As a result, through SFEFC, colleges are charged by the Scottish Executive with promoting key government priorities in relation to widening access and increasing participation, and were a particular focus for the Scottish Parliament's Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committees' enquiry into Lifelong Learning and the Scottish Executive's response (Scottish Executive: 2003). Although, for most of the period since Incorporation, the sector was driven by the funding mechanism towards vigorous inter-institutional competition as we have seen this has been dampened down more recently by 'third-way' policy direction towards collaboration and rationalisation, and the establishment of a ceiling on funded growth, paradoxically at a time when the Government claims that Widening Access and Lifelong Learning are key priorities for colleges. Senior managers are thus subject to a range of possibly conflicting targets.

At the same time, in response to direct policy steering, and in order to cut costs and remain financially viable FE colleges in Scotland have become a key site for the government's modernisation agenda, acting as a relay device for neo-liberal policy in helping to change the values and culture of the public sector. Thus colleges have introduced new and more flexible contracts of employment, emphasising individual senior manager and lecturer responsibility, monitored through PI driven appraisal systems, and have effected comprehensive re-structuring of staff structures and staff numbers including the replacement of lecturing staff by so called "learning assistants" sometimes described as "right-sizing" and "rationalisation". In his letter of guidance to SFEFC in January, 2005 the deputy first minister of the Scottish Parliament, Jim Wallace, states in relation to "pay modernisation and human resource management":

*"I look to the council to ensure that this settlement continues the modernisation of Human Resources management and remuneration beyond just pay, grading and equal pay issues. Any investment in pay modernisation should allow greater contractual flexibility and greater linkage of pay performance at local level, thereby encouraging more collaboration on HR matters across the sector. It should be used to equip institutions to be competitive in the labour market and to ensure that they have staff with the skills and flexibility to meet the changing demands of ensuring future quality and success of the college sector"* (Scottish Executive, 2005; pages 2 and 3).

Scottish colleges are key also to Scottish Executive (and prior to the election of the Scottish Parliament, Scottish Office) policies to increase global economic performance, and UK government preoccupation with the creation of a "a world-class system for economic competitiveness" (Barber, 1997). The UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair puts it this way:

*"Reform is a vital part of rediscovering a true national purpose, part of a bigger picture in which our country is a model of a 21<sup>st</sup> century developed nation: with sound, stable, economic management; dynamism and enterprise in business; the best educated and creative nation in the world; and a welfare state which promotes our aims and achievements"*(Foreword to 'Our Competitive Future': DTI, 1998, pages iii-iv). and

*"The modern world is swept by change. New technologies emerge constantly, new markets are opening up. There are new competitors but also great new opportunities ... . This world challenges business to be innovative and creative, to improve performance continuously, to build new alliances and ventures ... in government, in business, in our universities and throughout society we must do much more to foster a new entrepreneurial spirit: equipping ourselves for the long-term, prepared to seize opportunities, committed to constant innovation and improved performance"* (Foreword to 'Our Competitive Future': DTI, 1998, page 5).

In Scotland this policy direction at the macro level is supported by colleges through their full and part-time programmes and their support for Scottish Enterprise and Department of Pensions and Works Funded Programmes. (Scottish Executive, 2000, 2001, 2002c; Scottish Office, 1999a, b and c). Although colleges continue to fulfil their intermediate labour market position, training for employment or training those in employment, they also provide programmes in basic literacy and numeracy, programmes for young people and adults with learning difficulties, and programmes

specifically designed to effect progression into degree level programmes in years 1, 2 and 3 in Higher Education Institutions through formal articulation agreements. In Scotland, more than 30% of higher education students study in further education colleges, compared with around 12% in England - and around 13% of all students studying in Scottish FE colleges study at HE level. The disparity between funding for HE students in FE colleges and HE students in Higher Education Institutions is a key area of dispute.

Colleges have been highly successful also at attracting students from disadvantaged urban and rural communities, with SFEFC paying special premiums to support social inclusion and learning in remote areas. Despite the effects of competition, colleges, principally serve local communities, with the exception of areas of curriculum specialism through provision by the former monotechnics, in the areas like nautical studies and agricultural studies, although in order to survive financially, during the 1990s, these monotechnics considerably diversified their course provision. Over 90% of the population of Scotland live within 30 minutes drive of a college, 40% live within 2 miles of a college and 90% of the population in the areas classed as most deprived in Scotland live within 4 miles of a college. In addition to the 47 main college campuses, in academic year 2001/02 colleges provided courses in over 4,000 community and work based locations. (Association of Scottish Colleges, 2002).

Despite the rhetoric of “joined-up-ness” (the claim that policy and practice across the public sector is connected and works in a co-ordinated way) in Scotland, the situation is rendered more complex by the departmental separation of Education from Enterprise and Lifelong Learning. The Schools Sector is within the Scottish Executive Education Department, the Further Education Sector is not. In relation to further education policy, the Minister, through civil servants, provides Guidance to the Funding Council. Civil servants within the Funding Council then interpret policy and provide, through Further Education circulars and letters, guidance to colleges. On a day to day basis, this is operationalised by communication between branches of the Funding Council and individual officers within colleges. In a formal sense however, the relationship is on the one hand between the Funding Council and the

boards of management and separately between the Funding Council and college principals who are “Accounting Officers” responsible to the Scottish Parliament. At college level, boards of management operate through committee structures providing strategic direction to college senior management. Although as I indicated earlier, all of these processes are open to influence from a variety of sources, the relationships between macro, meso and micro levels are bi-directional, and indeed policies have their own momentum inside the state and thus purposes and intentions are re-worked and re-orientated over time (Ball, 1994; Codd, 1998) it is very difficult for individual colleges to operate outwith neo-liberal policy direction and for individuals within the system to exercise agency.

#### What counts as effectiveness?

Within the Scottish FE Sector effectiveness is set in the context of Scottish Executive policy direction and is “enshrined” within the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act, 1992 (Scottish Office, 1992). The Act requires college boards of management to “secure local effective and efficient further education on behalf of the communities which the college serves”. As with other public sector organisations; these governing bodies were set up in order to engender “a more business like approach” to the management of public services effected by giving a majority of places on the boards to local business people. Thereafter, however effectiveness is ill defined in policy documents and indeed the terms efficiency and effectiveness are often used interchangeably or at least not separated in terms of their dynamic tension. The sense in which increased efficiency may decrease effectiveness is often lost and there is no equivalent in the FE sector to the HMIe guideline publication “How good is our school?” (HMIe, 2003).

Certainly, however, colleges have been “encouraged” by the funding model to be ever more efficient in terms of annual targets for reducing unit costs, that is, the cost of producing a 40 hour unit of student activity or SUM, while it is tacitly acknowledged, that effectiveness cannot be allowed to suffer. Effectiveness, although not clearly defined, can be derived from performance indicators which are

used by colleges themselves, HMIe and SFEFC to monitor college performance, and by HMIe, quality auditor and financial auditor reports on aspects of college work, and on the “performance” of the sector as a whole by Audit Scotland. It is of course by such mechanisms that managerialism does its work on the institution and the individual.

Turning firstly to Performance Indicators (PIs), 2003 was the first year in which Further Education College Performance Indicators were published publicly. Hitherto, they had been used internally by colleges and by HMIe during the Review (code for Inspection) process. The publication of Performance Indicators occupy an interesting location within both neo-liberal, and third-way rhetoric, providing opportunities for the state to monitor the progress of various public services against ‘targets’, allowing the public the appearance of opportunity to “choose”, between different providers and giving providers themselves the opportunity to monitor the performance of employees, the providers of contracted support services, and ‘competitor’ institutions. All of this operationalised and effected through the publication of individual institutional development plans, which give the appearance of devolving planning and responsibility.

The performance indicators published by the Funding Council in September 2003 allow comparison of colleges across the spectrum of enrolment, completion, drop out and success rates. In common with other such desiderata, the published figures are not unproblematic. Success and completion rates take no account of previous qualifications or policies of widening access or local level social and economic pressures. The UK appears to have one of the most stubborn ties between educational achievement and social background (Reay 2000; Hargreaves, 2003) and drop-out rates may represent, in some cases at least, a positive narrative in relation to students moving on “early” to employment. Although there were differences between them, the four research colleges are however not significantly out of line individually or collectively against sector performance, whatever that measures. PI figures for all four research colleges and sector averages are presented in the Appendix (Appendix 23). However, although these figure measure outcomes rather



than process, it would be surprising if the publication of PIs did not have an effect on learning, teaching and assessment in the classroom.

Sector, college and individual staff effectiveness is also monitored by a raft of internal and external review and audit procedures. HMIe, although stripped of their policy development role in 2000 and subject to an annual contract with SFEFC, continue to provide through a cycle of four year Review (Inspection) Reports and intermediate Follow up to the Review Reports, a comprehensive “picture” of college “effectiveness” across “subject areas” and “whole college leadership” and “support to the learner services”. Here again, however, the Reports are presented unproblematically as rational assessments of college provision graded against a 4 point scale, ranging from very good, good and fair to unsatisfactory, as if all colleges were funded equally, were located in the same area, had the same staff and students and were reviewed by the same team of Inspectors and colleges did not spend a large amount of time and money preparing for Review, given the consequences of a poor report for colleges and individuals.

In addition, college effectiveness is monitored, by their own quality systems and quality staff, by external examination bodies, primarily in Scotland the Scottish Qualifications Authority and by a number of intermediate quality standard organisations including the Investors in People standard and the Scottish Quality Management System. The latter managed by a private sector organisation, Babcock Thorne, who, despite a series of high profile internal management difficulties, are trusted to monitor the quality of management within Scotland’s FE colleges. In addition colleges are subject to monitoring by Local Enterprise Companies in relation to their training programmes and by private sector organisations contracted by the government to manage New Deal: Welfare to Work programmes. Finally, although primarily engaged to monitor financial performance, a range of internal and external auditors together with auditors from Audit Scotland and SFEFC monitor college effectiveness in relation to management and governance. In such circumstances the pressure to be successful on colleges and their staff are significant, and potentially divisive. And as with the HMIe Review colleges spend much time

and money in preparing for quality and financial audits and in conducting their own internal audits and reviews.

### The Colleges

How typical were the colleges where the research was undertaken? The colleges were chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, as a part time researcher, I needed to be able to move easily and quickly between them, no college was more than 45 minutes away from either my home or from where I worked. Secondly, I had well established relationships with colleagues in the colleges and was employed by one of them. The latter is certainly not unproblematic and I discuss some of the issues involved throughout the thesis. An indication of the maturity of the sector and the relationships between the colleges is that despite or perhaps because of the pressures on them the College Principals and their staff were already working on a range of collaborative issues, despite their close proximity and continuing need to compete for funding contracts (Further Education code for competing for students). In particular, I had personally led a SFEFC funded project to develop core skills software, involving the 4 colleges (including individually, my key college contacts) and a private sector partner. Thirdly, although no “monotechnics” or colleges receiving special premium “remoteness” or “land based” funding were involved, the research colleges covered over 90% of the Scottish Further Education curriculum, in terms of subject area and indeed in one college, nearly 40% of enrolments were from people from rural postcodes. As indicated earlier, the research colleges together accounted for around 10% of Scottish FE student activity, over 10% of enrolments at both FE and HE level and just over 9% of SUM’s, (students unit of measurement; 40 hours) and were not untypical in terms of mode of attendance or gender balance of students. Again, as indicated earlier, one college was one of the largest in Scotland, one was medium sized and two were smaller and again this is in line with the position across Scotland. All four colleges were located in Scotland’s central belt, as are 28 of the 47 colleges. Further detail of the research college staff, and student PI and College

profile data figures (SFEFC 2003a; SFEFC 2003b) is presented in the Appendix (Appendix 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31).

### The Senior Managers - And What Works Well?

How typical were the senior managers? Although initially I had intended to seek responses from only 8 senior managers, previous pilot work had taught me about attrition rates in research and so I wrote to 12 senior managers, 3 in each of the colleges. Although the majority of senior managers are male in Scotland's FE colleges especially Principals, significant progress has been made in addressing the gender balance and within the 4 colleges I was able to write to 5 female senior managers including two Principals. Across the sector, almost all senior managers come from an education background, that is, they have been teachers and this was also the case in the 4 colleges. They were, I suggest, typical then in so far as it is possible to say such a thing about a "group" of individuals.

Following my presentation to the college principals as described in chapter 3 and their agreement, I emailed the senior managers, outlining my purposes, confirming what I felt to be the benefits and gave them a copy of my thesis proposal seeking comment. Thereafter, I wrote to them by normal mail asking them to tell me what they think works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the FE classroom. A stamped, addressed to my home, envelope was included and at intervals I emailed them using a variety of approaches (I know most of them as colleagues of a number of years standing) in order to encourage responses.

Before discussing what the senior managers said, I want to say a little more about how I will present data. In chapter 3, I explained how I used what Silverman (2000) calls the constant comparative method, and that while my research approaches are essentially qualitative in that I am interested in participants' perspectives, their interpretation of situations and the meanings that they attach to their own behaviour, I think also that it is helpful, where appropriate, to adopt a modified

phenomenological approach by presenting data using what are essentially quantitative methods.

As a result, I will be presenting the phase 1 data using tables to convey the intensity and frequency of the perspectives and meanings which I have drawn from the answers given by participants. Table 4.2 illustrates an example of a main construct categories table.

**Table 4.2**

<b>Main Construct Categories</b>	<b>% Response</b>
Main Construct 1	49
Main Construct 2	30
Etc.	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

And, following discussion of the table for each of the main construct categories each of the subcategories will be presented (and discussed) as illustrated in table 4.3

**Table 4.3**

<b>Sub Categories: Main Category</b>	<b>% Response</b>
Sub Category A	21
Sub Category B	16
Etc.	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49</b>

Turning now to what the senior managers said, although responses were brief and mostly in the form of “bullet points” (they were all containable within the single sided proforma I supplied), I identified from the “raw data” 54 separate comments, from which I constructed 8 sub categories and two main categories, one comment “passing assessments is not necessarily the same as learning” was unclassifiable, but

was a useful starting point for my phase 2 interviews. Table 4.4 shows the main construct categories and percentage responses for the senior managers.

**Table 4.4**

<b>Senior Manager Main Categories</b>	<b>% Response</b>
<b>Sample Size: N = 6</b>	
Meso/College level factors	37
Micro/Classroom level factors	61
(Unclassifiable)	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

Simply, senior managers across the 4 colleges saw “What works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments” as falling into 2 broad areas - meso or college level factors, and micro or classroom level factors. More importantly, however, this broad division seems to suggest at first sight a dichotomy between things which reflect managerialist concerns and are the direct responsibility of the senior managers to manage, lead or coordinate, and these were in the minority, and those, the majority, (almost two thirds) which seem to be the responsibility of the classroom lecturer.

Closer analysis suggests an even starker polarisation between the responses of individual managers who either almost entirely focused on the meso or the micro levels. That is, they saw what works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments as either almost entirely their responsibility or almost entirely the responsibility of the classroom lecturer. There were few examples of a manager giving responses at both levels. Furthermore, although there was a degree of consistency across college responses, in one of the colleges, one senior manager saw responsibilities as being entirely his own, while another saw it as being entirely a classroom level matter. This difference may reveal either a divergence at policy level or a set of unexplored and undiscussed issues. Equally, of course, this may simply reflect structural differences in responsibilities held by different senior



managers. For example, if a job remit includes student guidance, it may be more likely that this is seen as important in helping students to learn to pass assessments. What is true, is that the majority of senior managers who responded focused on the classroom level, as opposed to the macro structural level. Of course, the numbers involved mean that they form a set of interesting “case studies” (Bassey, 1981) rather than a “representative sample”, although clearly this points the way to further research, as well as allowing some speculation about managers’ views across the sector.

How did these categories break down into their constituent parts? Table 4.5 displays the sub categories for the meso, college level factors, which accounted for 37% of the total senior management categories.

**Table 4.5**

<b>Meso/College level factors - Sub-categories</b>	<b>% Response</b>
Effective Support Mechanisms	17
Effective Systems	13
Effective Lecturing Staff	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37</b>

As with all such categorisations in serious qualitative work, although they were arrived at following painstaking analysis of the data, they remain essentially subjective. As indicated earlier, as Dey (1993) reminds us qualitative data are not ‘out there’ awaiting collection like bags of rubbish, and of course the same may be said of so called hard data emerging from positivistic approaches. I returned to the data many times to confirm my 3 way split and although the differences between ‘effective support mechanisms’ and ‘effective systems’ may not be immediately obvious, in the Further Education community there are agreed differences between “front-line” mechanisms which support learning and systems which are overarching

“back-office” administrative services. Having said that, taken together ‘mechanisms’ and ‘systems’ account for 30% of the 37% within the overall category compared to the 7% which seems to be to do with effective staffing, although clearly organisational structures are only rendered effective by human agency and human perception and are not inherently effective or non effective.

Taking each of the sub categories in turn, in the sub category “effective support mechanisms”, which accounted for 17% of senior management comments, I included comments about; guidance services, support for learning services - a growing feature of Further Education in Scotland in response to the report of the Beattie Committee (Scottish Executive: 1999) - library services, and support from course teams, because they all appeared to be about ways in which Further Education colleges provide wrap around direct support for students, that is, services in response to social, emotional and learning deficit issues which may lead to “learning interruption”, drop out or serious dislocation from course deadlines and objectives.

Specific responses included:

**Effective support mechanisms**

- *“Accessible and effective pastoral support” and*
- *“Ensuring additional support is in place”.*

These services have developed significantly over the past 10 years within Further Education colleges in Scotland and although it is too simple to suggest that they are entirely a response to funding penalties imposed on early drop out - students who fail to attend beyond the first 25% of the course are not funded at all - it is the case that Further Education colleges in England and Wales have even more well developed support systems in response to much tighter funding penalties.

In the sub category “effective systems”, which accounts for 13% of senior management comments, I counted comments about; quality assurance systems - Further Education colleges as we have seen are subject to extensive and intrusive managerialist external and internal monitoring, based around procedures and language derived from total quality management processes imported into British Industry in the late 1980s from Japan (Morley and Rassool, 2000) - student funding systems, resources and college estates, timetabling systems, internal communication and leadership, assessment and moderation systems.

Specific responses included:

#### **Effective Systems**

- *“Keeping building and learning environment clean, tidy and fit for purpose” and*
- *“Applying assessment moderation procedures effectively”.*

These systems collectively provide a meso level of support for the student ensuring that they gain access to funding entitlements and in ensuring the integrity, good management and governance of college quality assurance, resource, estate, structural and assessment processes.

In the sub category “effective staff”, which accounts for 7% of senior management comments, I counted comments about; staff training, staff induction and staff motivation, commitment and enthusiasm. Remember that we are discussing here things which senior managers seemed to consider to be their responsibility in terms of management, leadership or co-ordination - I use these terms loosely as they tend to be used interchangeably within the sector to mean some sort of manager action.

Specific responses included:

**Effective Staff**

- *“Effective staff induction and staff development” and*
- *“Developing interested, committed and enthusiastic delivery staff”.*

Staff induction, staff training (continuing professional development - CDP) and the motivation of staff seem to be seen as a senior manager task which, if properly organised, would assist students to learn to pass assessments, as of course would the other systems and mechanisms within the overall category. Day and Pennington (1993) describe the dimensions of CPD and the complexity of providing for professionals at different stages in their careers, while meeting institutional needs.

Turning now to what senior managers appear to see as the other main category - indeed the major category, accounting for 61% of comments - that of micro level classroom factors, Table 4.6 presents the 5 sub categories.

**Table 4.6**

<b>Micro/Classroom level factors - Sub-categories</b>	<b>% Response</b>
Lecturer led methodology	20
Lecturer led classroom management	7
Lecturer creation of positive affect	13
Development of student meta skills	15
Development of student specific knowledge and skills	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>61</b>

Of the 5 sub-categories, “lecturer led methodology” is both the most frequently referred to of the classroom level factors and indeed the most frequently referred to of all factors, across both main categories. Within this sub-category senior managers as might be expected included comments about teaching methods, but there were also comments about providing students with appropriate and valid examples and providing guidance towards assessment

Specific responses included:

**Lecturer led methodology**

- *Appropriate reiterations of - and questioning/discussion on key areas” and*
- *Using teaching methods to ensure a wide as possible engagement in the development process”.*

“Lecturer led methodology” is obviously closely aligned to “lecturer classroom management” which accounted for a further 7% of the comments. Here I included comments about the learning environment, materials and resources and appropriately



written instruments of assessment. Moyles (1995) provides a wider definition which includes physical context, structures and routines, resource management, behaviour control and communication - while Laslett and Smith (1984) put it more starkly: rule 1, get them in; rule 2, get them out, rule 3, get on with it; rule 4, get on with them. An overall summary of approaches to classroom methodology is provided by Pollard et al (2002).

Specific responses included:

**Lecturer led classroom management**

- *“Clear, consistent guidelines” and*
- *“Good quality learning environment, materials and resources”.*

The examples of the “uses of assessment” within “lecturing methodology” and “classroom management” demonstrate the essential artificiality and fine nuancing of such judgements. It is unlikely that lecturers’ discriminate between the two, on a routine basis. Indeed as Morgan and Morris (1999) suggest, good teaching, because of what they call endemic differences in learning style, is about being able to recognise individual learner needs and adapting methods to suit particular circumstances. Although classroom management seems to refer to organisational features whereas lecturing methodology appears to refer to interactional features, together they provide the background and interface to teacher and student interaction, and together they account for 27% of all the senior management comments.

The third classroom level factor which seemed important to senior managers was that of “lecturer created positive affect”. The creation of a positive teaching environment in which students feel valued, accounted for 13% of their comments. Here I included things like students being encouraged to be confident, to believe in themselves, valuing issues, and openness of teaching staff to comments and feedback from students. There is a vast literature on this subject, including work by Nais (1989) and Woods (1987).

Specific responses included:

**Lecturer created positive affect**

- *Students must be encouraged explicitly to be confident” and*
- *Valuing the learner”.*

The development of a ‘deep approach’ to learning continues to be one of the primary conceptual tools in our understanding of how students learn (Entwistle, 2000, 2003), despite what Haggis (2003) calls a surprising lack of critique. Fifteen percent of senior management comments focused on the development of student meta skills (that is, “learning to learn” or being conscious of your thought processes in order to learn more effectively) although they did not use the term ‘meta-cognition’. Muijs and Reynolds (2001) describe the latter as knowledge about your thought processes, self regulation and monitoring of strategies for learning, and Brown (1990) and Wood (1988) describe the way in which students should be supported to develop ways of regulating their own thinking as ‘scaffolding’, procedures and steps towards understanding and knowledge transformation. The term ‘scaffolding’ is, of course, also used by Vygotsky (1978) to describe the development of skills, within what he calls the ‘zone of proximal development’. Lastly, Perkins (1993) uses the term ‘thinking to learn’ to describe the sense in which meta skills can be taught, by making thinking a visible and conscious process within classroom cultures.

Of course in seeking participants views on learning teaching and assessment, one of the things which I was keen to explore given the policy context is the extent to which it is too simplistic to see Further Education as merely being about preparing people for a trade in a straightforward, instrumental sense, where knowledge is valued over understanding and knowledge transformation. Within this category I counted comments about students taking ownership of their learning, the development of effective study skills, and the development of understanding on the part of the learner of what is expected of them.

Specific responses included:

**Development of student meta skills**

- *Helping learners take ownership for decisions about learning” and*
- *Teaching how an assessment works”.*

Lastly, and perhaps surprisingly, given what is often said about the purposes of Further Education only 6% of senior management comments seem to be about the development of student knowledge and skills, but perhaps it is simply that all the other categories are seen as supporting this overarching one? Here I counted comments about revision and examination techniques, and developing skills through practice in realistic situations. Of course, there are a number of different ways in which skills and knowledge can be acquired ranging from the formal and didactic to the open and unstructured. Muijs and Reynolds (2001) provide a description of what they call ‘direct instruction’, while Moyles (2001) describes teaching to promote active learning and Kyriacou (1991) suggests that active learning can offer a much more powerful experience of what is to be learned than expository (direct instruction) teaching; a view shared by Morgan and Morris (1999). What is however missing from the phase 1 senior manager data is any sense of a constructivist view of learning and even within the “meta-skills” category, skills and knowledge appear to be “out there” waiting to be picked up.

Specific responses included:

**Development of student specific knowledge and skills**

- *“Using mock assessments” and*
- *“Learning through practical tasks/exercises.*

Given the policy context which framed my research, taken together, the senior manager comments present a picture of what they think works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments. It is of course only one part of the picture. I was keen therefore to be able to compare their comments with the comments of lecturer staff and students. This comparison is presented and discussed in chapter 7 but I wanted also to take the opportunity to interview some of the senior managers in order to explore their views in more depth, and indeed, phase 2 of my research was specifically designed to explore the answers to questions raised in phase 1, effectively, “drilling-down” and unpacking understanding at a deeper level of analysis. In so doing, I wanted to go beyond a simple exploration of what they think works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments, by discussing with them what they think the relationship is between learning and teaching and assessment, and to look at what they see as their role and responsibility in relation to policy and practice.

#### The Views of Senior Managers Revisited

Following on from my data analysis, validation and reliability review and write up of the phase 1 data in draft form, I developed a set of questions for the senior managers. I then contacted the senior managers, seeking “volunteers” who were willing to discuss their views with me in more depth. Although, my initial intention was to hold focus group interviews with each of the sets of participants because it would have been useful to have brought managers from all 4 colleges together at the one time for a discussion, it proved difficult enough logistically to find times in busy schedules for them to meet me individually. Getting them together would of course have also changed the interview dynamic and although the sharing of perceptions and ideas might have sparked off additional thoughts and dimensions, it is also possible that they might not have been willing to share with me within a focus group the same thoughts that they were able to share with me on a one-to-one basis. A further logistical and methodological difficulty was that although focus grouping was my preferred option, I could not guarantee to bring staff and students from different colleges together and so my groupings were always more likely to be from a single

college. Morgan and Morris (1999) discuss the benefits and possible difficulties of focus group interviews, while Silverman (2000) and Holstein and Gubrium (1995) discuss the extent to which interview responses can be treated as giving direct access to the experience of participants or to actively constructed narratives.

I was however able over about a 4 week period in December, 2003 and January 2004 to visit each of the research colleges and interview one of the senior managers. Apart from logistical reasons, this had the added advantage of allowing me to meet them in their own "territory" and as a consequence, they were, I think, more likely to have been relaxed and comfortable than if I had for example, met them in my room, in my college. Indeed, I had conducted some small scale research in relation to another project within my college some time before, and had found that visiting colleagues in their work spaces was useful in establishing a relaxed working relationship and as far as this is ever possible, ensuring their informed consent and voluntary participation. As a result, even within my own college, for this research, I also met my senior manager colleague in his work space rather than my own. Each of the interviews lasted between 15 and 20 minutes and were recorded using an audio tape. Although, there are obvious disadvantages in such systems, their intrusiveness and the possible reluctance of participants to commit their thoughts to a "permanent" record, I knew that I could not hope to capture all of the things they said or to attend to their tone or body language if I were making notes. I was aware also that I could not attend to what they were saying and concentrate on my response or my own body language or voice tone and adopt a Rogerian (Rogers, 1975) approach, basically employing an open mind and empathetic approach to the process, if both myself and the interviewee were distracted by my note taking.

In using audio tape, I did however reassure them (again) concerning matters of anonymity and confidentiality. But, I also of course benefited from having a close professional working relationship with the senior managers established over years of collaboration. Such relationships are of course never simple or indeed tension free, but I am confident that our relationships were such that they trusted me not to reveal personal detail in my thesis or through the subsequent validity and reliability



checking process, or to attribute their views in discussing my findings with other colleagues. I also conducted each of the interviews as open discussions using open questions so as to allow my colleagues the opportunity to explore their responses, in giving me access to their perceptions of their experience as senior managers. I took time before the interviews to engage in the usual type of discussion which emerges when colleagues get together and at the end of the interviews in order to allow the opportunity for any thoughts or requests for confirmation of confidentiality and anonymity. Giving such time is of course important in continuing to develop professional relationships based on trust and ensuring that further work together is possible. No requests for confirmation of confidentiality and anonymity emerged and I take this as further, although of course not absolute, confirmation that I was getting access to valid and reliable responses, given all of the pressures upon them.

So what did they say? I discuss below their responses to each of the questions which I asked. In so doing, as indicated earlier, I have not presented my findings using the same modified phenomenological approach which I employed with the phase 1 data. This is because the data does not to the same extent lend itself to such representation. I have instead adopted a narrative approach which aims to gain insights into the views of participants and access to their own accounts. However because of the size of my 'sample' and the space available for the analysis this is of course not a fully 'grounded' ethnographic approach. As with the phase 1 data, initial findings and draft accounts were discussed as extensively as possible with all participant senior managers and other senior manager colleagues in other colleges, in order to enhance validity and authenticity, and I had found a willingness to accept them as valid views. As one senior manager put it in a subsequent telephone discussion:

*"I enjoyed reading the views of colleagues and found them convincing, with no surprises"*

I had begun to use phrases like 'were you surprised?' and 'did it surprise you?' when referring to the data in conversation and in writing following a visit to my college by Pamela Munn towards the end of my pilot work, where she had asked the question during a meeting with staff, held in order to discuss my emerging findings.

### Phase 1 Findings – Have I got it Right?

So, although, I had previously “checked-out” the senior managers’ views of my findings in relation to the phase 1 data, a useful way in to our discussion was to remind them of what they and other managers had said . In addition , I wanted to confirm, the major fracture between the views of senior managers. It will be recalled that the senior managers had reported that external to the classroom factors are important in helping students to learn to pass assessments. In responding, senior managers confirmed the bi-polar split in their views within the phase 1 data but without the polarity between individuals. That is, in their interviews all of the senior managers indicated that in their view what works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the classroom was much more than what happens in the classroom. In fact, whereas in the phase 1 data although senior managers identified outwith classroom teachers as being important, the majority of their comments were about classroom level factors, in their phase 2 responses they stressed, almost to the exclusion of classroom level factors, the importance of the wrap around support services. But the services were seen not merely as individual support mechanisms, there was a sense also of the student being made to feel that they belonged, that the culture of the college and its ethos was based on a wish to sustain and nurture individuals whose previous experience of education might not have been positive or successful. Ecclestone (2002) discusses the same sense of concern for their students displayed by the FE college staff she interviewed in her study of the development of GNVQs in England.

The following quotation is typical of what the senior managers said:

*“I don’t think that its just a classroom thing, I do think that it is partly to do with the whole organisation. It’s about the culture, the way people feel that they belong, the way they are supported. I think its to do with the team approach, and line management and there is obviously a responsibility for the lecturer in the classroom, but unless a lot of other parts are in place, then it can have a huge impact on how they deliver. It can be down to the supply of a TV and video, if its not there, it can impact. So it’s the support which can have a big impact, the environment, the state of the classroom, the type of*

*technology that is available in the learning centre, so the facilities and the books, so I see it very much definitely as a macro thing."*

Thus, senior managers see their role as being one which supports both lecturers and students to be successful in the classroom. Learning to pass assessments is seen by managers as being underpinned, as one of them put it by "a whole raft of pull down services." Although, one of the few comments which was about the classroom level was about the importance of formative assessment - for this senior manager formative work was very much about lecturers giving students written feed back which would help the student to improve their performance - this theme was not taken up by the other senior managers.

Throughout, the terms student and learner were used interchangeably and unproblematically and learners, students and lecturers appear mainly to be on the receiving end of support, rather than exercising personal ownership, responsibility and agency. I was therefore interested in exploring this a little further and asked next about how senior managers saw their role.

### The Senior Manager's Role

In line with my general approach to my research I was specific in what I was asking. I asked senior managers about how they saw their role in relation to helping students to learn to pass assessments in the classroom. And, here again, the senior managers reported that they saw themselves being involved in as one of them put it "making the big picture work". Senior managers discussed the ways in which they are involved in the design of courses, in providing accommodation and training, in providing guidance and support, in linking college action plans to team action plans, and in providing resources in terms of material and staffing. In summary, as one of them put it, in "providing a direct link between strategy and the classroom". The following quotation is typical of their views:

*“...as senior managers we all have a responsibility to make the big picture work, to make sure all the support services are working, to make sure they are in place. We have a shared responsibility for accommodation and so on, staff training, they all add up, they all work to making it possible for teachers to run, with students successful learning sessions. Some of us have more focused roles, for example in quality assurance which I have mentioned...”*

There is an interesting fracture within Further Education Colleges in terms of perception of responsibility which I discuss further in chapter 7. A fracture which is captured in the last quotation in particular – here the senior manager is seen as the person responsible at whole college level for ensuring that processes are in place which match the requirements of HMIe Review. The latter quotation also reveals the extent to which these are tacit and the extent to which the lecturers and students (learners) are seen to have a mainly passive role.

### Definitions of Effective Learning

I was interested next in exploring what all of this meant for senior managers' views on what might count as effective learning. Perhaps unexpectedly given what I have said about their responses to the first questions, senior managers had a view of learning which is both cognitive and to a limited extent constructivist, although there was little evidence that their definition went beyond the development of the understanding of facts, with little sense of the challenging of knowledge, and the social construction of meaning.

Thus, senior managers talked about teaching and challenging students, about helping them know what they are doing, about the danger of “teaching to assessments”, about ensuring that students can take what they understand and apply it, can take it apart, and as one of them put it “shift the emphasis to learning and away from teaching”. They also characterised learning as being about acquiring knowledge and skills, and being about helping learners know what they are doing, providing models and explaining what terms mean, and being about “practical things”.

But senior manager views were also very sophisticated in their thinking, as the following quotation suggests:

*"I have a well rehearsed argument because I've seen stages of it articulated elsewhere. And yes there is a potentially a contradiction where in self-evaluation you may be saying that we've got cracking support services, look at all this care and attention we lavish on students and look at all the opportunities for one to one, look at the services we provide. Where you've started off by saying we've got good interesting programmes and lots of opportunity for project work and learning together and all the rest of it and we think teaching and learning is good. We've got well qualified staff and lots of staff development and yet somehow at the end of the day students don't pass all their units: so we need to be interested in access and inclusion; the nature of the client, so we are interested in distance travelled, not just attainment but also achievement."*

Thus although, senior managers were aware of the need to attend to factors beyond a simplistic view of learning as passing assessment, at the same time, they were aware also that managerialist policy driven attainment based Performance Indicator systems require them to be able to argue for an alternative view of what might count as success. This seems especially important within the context of other government policy priorities in relation to widening access and social inclusion, which might have a detrimental effect on attainment PI's.

### Definitions of Effective Teaching

Given that there is the beginnings of a debate initiated by HMIe (HMIe, 2004) within Scottish Further Education about the balance of the importance of learning and teaching, with a shifting of emphasis towards learning, and this was apparent in the views of senior managers, I was interested in the extent to which this might be rhetorical, and therefore in their definitions of what might count as effective teaching. When asked about this managers said it was about helping learners, it was about managing the learning and guiding discussion, it was about innovative methods and good performance indicators. They said it was about planning and being familiar with the subject, about reinforcing what has been learned from previous "lessons" and about preparing various methods of delivery. It was about



variety and using technology and stimulating the learner, and it was about organising knowledge and using different techniques.

There was discussion also, albeit limited, of the importance of formative approaches.

*“The classic HMI triggers, you know have they had good feedback on the formative work that they’ve done, have they been given written feedback, so they can go back and review that and feedback that does indicate to them where they are and the areas they can improve their performance and things that they’ve said that best match the kind of response that the tutor is looking for”.*

This response like the earlier one is somewhat unusual in that the majority of responses tended to be more about classroom management factors and the role of the lecturer in managing the learning experience. There is little sense here then of transfer of responsibility from lecturer to student. The central character as Morgan and Morris (1999) report, is the teacher. Teaching appears to be about the lecturer doing things for the student rather than putting the emphasis on to learner responsibility. In chapters 5 and 6, I discuss lecturers’ and students’ perceptions of responsibility for learning and passing assessments and of course in chapter 7 I provide a comparative analysis of the views of all of the participants.

#### Effective Learning and Teaching – the Role of Senior Managers

Although, senior managers may have already covered this ground in their responses to my second question, the intention of asking them about their role in relation to effective learning and teaching was to focus in on the classroom level. However, and given the policy context this should not be surprising, here again senior managers saw their role as very much a macro, underpinning one. They discussed their role in relation to developing resources and ways of encouraging innovative approaches to teaching and learning and about providing guidance through quality assurance procedures and providing resources. They also saw it in terms of holding meetings with heads of department, about management and board level meetings and formal reporting systems.

As one of them put it:

*"I would want to talk about the more focused roles that some of us have. Certainly on the quality assurance side, we would want, I would want to be sure that the resources that are being used, the way they are being deployed and the skills of our lecturer colleagues and so on are of sufficiently high quality, and quantity as well, to ensure that effective teaching produces effective learning, helps to produce effective learning."*

Thus, although senior managers accept responsibility at a macro level for what is going on in the classroom and are involved through the provision of staff training and delivery of resources in supporting learning and teaching, it is still very much the case that responsibility for the day to day activity of learning, teaching and assessment is seen to be the responsibility of the individual lecturer. Indeed, throughout FE, systems of classroom observation and appraisal are predominantly top down.

#### The Role of the Funding Council and other Agencies

Finally, in relation to the views of the senior managers I was interested in their perceptions of the role of SFEFC and other agencies in relation to effective learning, teaching and assessment. The Funding Council were very much seen as setting the agenda through the directing of ring-fenced funding for Scottish Executive priorities, what Coote (1999) describes as "steering by cattle prod?". The Funding Council role was seen also as unproblematically about providing funding and the macro policy for the wrap around services which support students and without which they would not be able to attend college. Providing the services which support effective learning, teaching and assessment was however seen as "college business". It was the college's responsibility to use the funds to support staff and students. Interestingly other funding agencies were left out of senior manager accounts almost entirely.

Senior manager views might be characterised by the following quotations:

*"I think they do, (SFEFC) I think I might surprise you by saying first of all financial. An example of that is one of the things that I do frequently in a day*

*is sign cheques for young student retention fund, hardship fund, childcare fund and so on and I think this is back to the wrapper which is around the learner. If these mechanisms were not in place then many more people would continue to be disadvantaged than would be the case at present. And for me these are all ways of helping the learner to have as positive an experience of college as they can, quite simply because if these things are not detractors they can have a greater ability to concentrate on the things they are here to do, which is fundamentally in my opinion to improve their life chances”.*

*“Well they have a role, the Funding Council have to have a role because they are providing us with funds, the College is responsible for the allocation of that money obviously, SFEFC do have a key role but it is the college’s responsibility and the senior management and other managers to ensure that staff in their own college are supported to a level that they feel that they should be”.*

So, support is provided to, delivered to, learners and to lecturers. The Funding Council sets the policy from this account and the colleges unproblematically appear to develop approaches to allocation of funding in line with policy direction?

### Key Findings Summary

In summary, senior manager responses to the phase 1 question what works well, fell into two main categories. Firstly meso, college level factors account for 37% of responses and within this sat 3 subcategories; support mechanism, support systems and staff. Secondly 61% of the senior managers responses identified micro classroom level factors, within which sat 5 subcategories; methodology, classroom management, positive affect, meta skills development, and the development of specific knowledge and skills. In the response to phase 2 questions however, although there was acknowledgement of the importance of the classroom and the lecturer and the role of the Funding Council in providing the funding and in setting the policy, this was presented mainly from the perspective of the senior managers role in providing a ‘wrapper’ of support services to students and lecturers and in managing processes and in mediating policy.

Given the policy context which framed my research, with its emphasis on the apparatus and mechanisms of managerialism and its preoccupation with target setting

and performance, the responses of senior managers seem perfectly reasonable. In focusing on the services and support structures for which they are responsible they reflect neo-liberal concerns with meso level steering devices which control their own work and the work of their staff and organise the college lives of students. In phase 1 even where they share perceptions of the classroom level they do so at one remove, valuing classroom management and meta-cognitive development alongside cognitive and affective categories and in phase 2 they concentrate almost entirely on the meso support level services for which they are responsible and by which they are judged. I was interest therefore in the extent to which these preoccupations would be shared by the other participants and in the chapter which follows I present and discuss the views of their colleagues the lecturing staff.

## CHAPTER 5

### Lecturing Staff: what works well?

#### Introduction

As we have seen, neo-liberal managerialism might be read as a set of practices and as importantly a set of assumptions which are invoked in the continuing project of welfare state reconstruction. I say as importantly because managerialism goes beyond a mechanistic application of management practices to embrace a set of normative assumptions about the right of the state and managers to control and coordinate public services more efficiently and effectively. As a consequence, public service organisations like FE Colleges have required to become much like business in their organisational structures. Although the term “the staff” in further education colleges continues to be used to mean “lecturing staff”, since Incorporation and as a consequence of the policy context the division of labour in colleges has become more complex as they have begun to employ large numbers of so called support staff, learning assistants (para-lecturing staff who work with students in the classroom, workshop and workplace), technicians, learning resource facilitators (modernist code for librarians), HR, finance, marketing and property staff and so on, reflecting managerialist concerns and of course providing an explanation for the focus on support services of senior managers. Indeed of course Incorporation itself was designed to deregulate the sector, cutting it free from the perceived paternalism of Local Authority control.

In academic year 2001/2002, colleges in Scotland employed around 12,500 full-time equivalent staff - around 22,000 individuals - around 25% on part-time contracts. Around 54% were lecturing staff and 46% support staff. (ASC: 2002; Scottish Executive: 2003). Table 5.1 gives a detailed breakdown.



**Table 5.1 - National Full-time Equivalent (FTE) figures for Staffing 2001/02**

	<b>Permanent</b>			<b>Temporary</b>			<b>All Staff</b>		
	Full-time	Part-time	<b>Total</b>	Full-time	Part-time	<b>Total</b>	Full-time	Part-time	<b>Total</b>
Teaching	4,583	676	<b>5,259</b>	104	1,311	<b>1,415</b>	4,688	1,987	<b>6,675</b>
Non-teaching	4,369	862	<b>5,231</b>	350	244	<b>594</b>	4,719	1,106	<b>5,825</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,952</b>	<b>1,538</b>	<b>10,490</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>1,555</b>	<b>2,010</b>	<b>9,406</b>	<b>3,093</b>	<b>12,500</b>

Lecturing staff are recruited from backgrounds which reflect the further education curriculum in terms of breadth of subject area and specialism. Unlike the schools sector, there is no mandatory pre-service teaching qualification, with most staff recruited from “industry” or from the school sector at both secondary and primary levels. Indeed, the Times Educational Supplement (TES, 2003) of 21 November 2003 reported that the Association of Colleges (AOC) was worried that in England and Wales, OFSTED demands for qualifications and training might act as a deterrent for many from industry who wanted to do a small amount of teaching or spend a short time in teaching before returning to industry. Except at senior management level there is little recruitment from the Higher Education sector and even at this level it is rare. Interestingly also, there is no tradition of migration from senior FE levels to senior levels in HE or the schools sector, and few migrations, as yet, from the lecturing level to HE lecturing posts or teaching posts in the schools sector. This despite much agitation in the wake of the “McCrone” settlement in the schools sector, which for the first time established teaching post salaries in schools at a higher level than lecturing post salaries in FE colleges. It will however be interesting to see if this affects recruitment to FE lecturing posts in future years from the schools sector or migration from FE to Schools Sector from individuals who hold school sector teaching qualifications. Wallace (2002) provides a useful, if disturbing, summary of the perceptions of lecturers new to the FE sector, although her focus is on FE in England, which contrasts their expectations with their experiences and suggest that initiatives intended to improve lecturer competence such as Further

Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) Standards, may be inadequate and misdirected.

The Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) is offered as an in-service qualification which is in many cases only begun after many years in post. Overall, in academic year 2001/02 (SFEFC, 2003b) only 84% of permanent full-time lecturing staff in Scottish FE colleges had a teaching qualification recognised by The Teachers' (Education, Training and Recommendation for Registration (Scotland)) Regulations 1993 (SOED, 1993). There seems however to be no relationship between percentage of staff with a teaching qualification and college performance in HMIE Review of learning and teaching as part of the HMIE Subject Review process, formerly Inspection of Colleges. Interestingly also, SFEFC in 2003 (Circular letter FE/26/03, 2003c) diluted its previous policy of setting targets for colleges in respect of number of lecturers with TQFE or equivalent by replacing that target with a requirement that "all teaching staff in FE colleges are professionally competent, not only in their discipline but also in teaching skills". The term "competent" is however left undefined. This despite the claim that the Funding Council "recognises the importance of staff training in improving the quality of learners' experiences, and that "staff development and professional qualifications are a priority area".

Lecturing staff bring with them considerable cultural capital from their trade and academic backgrounds. The social make-up of FE lecturers is complex, gender tends to reflect trade or subject area, with female lecturers predominating in Childcare, Social Care, Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy and Office Study areas, while men predominate in Engineering and Construction. Middle management posts reflect this gender fracture also, as do the balance of permanent to part-time posts. It is not simply the case that part-time lecturers are more likely to be female, it depends on the subject mix and how colleges are developing their curriculum in response to economic and demographic change. It is, however, important that we understand more about the ways in which the cultural backgrounds of lecturers and their students interact (Colley, 2002a, 2002b) and the extent to which, as a consequence of neo-liberal managerialist concerns, academic work has been routinised, and subject to

short-term employment contracts, and the extent to which this has encouraged a simple “wage for work done” attitude among academic staff and a consequent reduction in ‘professionalism’ (Dearlove, 1997). Indeed it might be argued that in FE the newer academic and support staff have helped to effect the change in that they have colonised colleges bring with them values which are variance with those of traditional academic staff. This together with an emphasis on efficiency and cost reduction has lead to more flexible working practices, aligning colleges with the requirements of the market, has produced the more complex division of labour which I referred to earlier and has been accompanied by a reduction in union influence and a reduction in career progression opportunities. All of this and the erosion of collectivism has of course left individuals, including senior managers vulnerable to surveillance through audit and inspection and the demands of ever more difficult improvement targets. It is within this context that my fieldwork took place.

#### The Staff in the Research Colleges

How typical were the staff in the colleges where the research took place? Across the 4 colleges, lecturing staff overall covered the majority of the Further Education curriculum, except in specialist areas like Nautical Studies and Agriculture. Together they represented around 10% of all FE college lecturing staff in Scotland, around 700 FTE, full-time equivalent posts. In gaining access to the work of these lecturing staff, however, I needed to accept that I could not expect to specify a precise representative sample across subject area, gender, years in post, qualification, age, etc.

Despite what I have said about the erosion of collectivism and a reduction in union influence, the classroom observation process on which my “what works well” question to lecturing staff was based is an area of significant sensitivity in further education. In many colleges such observation does not take place, except within TQFE programmes (it has become a union/management issue) and there is no agreed system across the sector. The lecturers trade union, the Educational Institute of

Scotland (EIS) Further Education Lecturers' Association (FELA) first annual conference in March 2004 (Members' Bulletin No. 2: March 2004) adopted the following resolution "This annual conference advises all branches to oppose pilot schemes or proposals which would involve classroom observation for purposes other than HMIe Inspection by HMIe Inspectors or TQ (FE) or equivalent training." But I was aware even prior to this that in seeking access, I was asking the participating colleges to exercise considerable trust and take a not insignificant risk with whatever systems were in place or planned. The fact that such systems have not been universally adopted in Scottish FE Colleges or indeed in the Schools sector is a good example of the ways in which local resources can mediate the effects of macro level policies (Ozga, 2005) At the same time, however, although HMIe and other auditors do not require colleges to have systems of classroom observation they do require them to have systems for monitoring lecturer performance. That such systems are in place cannot but help shape the perceptions of lecturers of what is important and what is expected of them. It is through such mechanisms that managerialism is effected.

Of the four colleges, one had a system of classroom observation in place, although it varied across curriculum teams; one had a pilot programme running, one had plans in place for a pilot programme and one had arrested progress towards a whole college programme following union led disquiet. In addition to these rather special circumstances, I needed also to overcome all the usual logistical obstacles which face any researcher in gaining access to the views of busy participants. Although I might have a clear view about the benefits to practice of my action orientation, to potential participants I might simply have been seen as the bringer of more work and stress, with no reward pecuniary, or in terms of a qualification or "time-off" teaching, often called 'remission' in FE colleges.

Within each college therefore, following initial permission from the Principals, I entered into detailed discussions with the college contacts. These discussions covered the purposes of my research and as reported in chapter 3, I gave them copies of my research proposal, and "data collection instruments" in advance by email,

together with a staff information sheet which summarised my research purposes and was intended for use either as it stood or as the basis for an internal staff newsletter item. As a result of these discussions, and in the light of my pilot work, we identified specific groups who we agreed might be sufficiently interested in the work to give time to it, and might gain from the experience both as individuals and to the benefit of the college. My pilot work had suggested that seeking volunteers was unlikely to work particularly well and that using the types of processes identified by Munn et al (1992) and Brown and McIntyre (1993), that of asking pupils (students) to select the teachers (lecturers), might have sufficiently raised anxiety levels in an already sensitive area, to such an extent that the whole project might have been endangered. Indeed of course, other selection methods such as student success in assessments or grading in HMIe review might have been equally problematic, if for different reasons.

In the end, following discussion with my college contacts, I got access to two curriculum teams, one in an Interdisciplinary Studies area, covering broad curriculum subjects like Communication and Numeracy as well as English, Biology and Art, and the other in the area of Information Technology and Computing. Interestingly, the two teams covered the so called core skills area within the Scottish FE curriculum. In England and Wales these are called key skills, and have been identified by Government as important in that it is claimed that they provide individuals with underpinning knowledge and skills which support vocational skills development and economic performance. In the other two colleges, groups who were undertaking the Teaching Qualification in Further Education were identified. Overall, I had a far greater number of staff participants than I identified in my initial research proposal but, as with the senior managers, I was aware from my pilot work that a combination of "lack of time", logistics and apathy would lead to considerable attrition. I did as a result, end up with a broad range of subject areas, gender, years in post and qualification mix. Subject areas included art, biology, care, computing, nursing, social studies and office studies; 27% were male and 73% female; and, length of service ranged from 2 to 20 years. Although the broad range represented meant that I could not realistically look for effects of subject, age, gender or years in post, on the



other hand any generalisations I was able to make would be more powerful. Table 5.2 gives a more detailed breakdown.

**Table 5.2 Lecturer Respondents: Subject Taught, Gender, Years in Post**

**Sample Size: N = 15**

Subject	Gender	Years in Post
Art and Design	Female	6.5 FE (2 Schools)
Art and Design	Male	6
Biology	Female	15
Care	Female	14
Communication	Female	7
Computing	Male	10
Computing	Female	12
Computing	Male	20
Learning Support	Female	4
Learning Support	Female	3
Multimedia	Female	5
Nursing	Female	3
Office Studies	Female	2
Social Care	Male	9
Social Studies	Female	2.5

I was however, as indicated earlier, as much interested in saying a lot about this particular group of staff as I was about being able to say something about FE lecturing staff or teachers in general. Part of the fascination of qualitative work is its constantly contested nature, where knowledge is always provisional, and personally and socially constructed (Somekh, 1995).

#### Gaining Access to the Lecturing Staff?

The purposes of my initial meetings with groups of staff were: to establish my credentials as a colleague, sharing a story in FE, and a researcher, with technical know-how; to reassure staff, about matters of confidentiality and anonymity, that the process was no part of their college appraisal system and that I would not be passing information about them to their managers; and to tell them about my research and what I felt they might get out of it as individuals and how their staff team might collectively

benefit. I also told them about the methods I would be employing and gave them briefing notes about the observation process, instructions in connection with the student response form and written confirmation of my purposes and code of conduct. Indeed, prior to the meetings I had written to staff via the college contacts (who were, as indicated earlier, themselves important gatekeepers and opinion leaders for the credibility of the research, and in encouraging data return) inviting them to become involved. And, after the meetings, I wrote to them again confirming the 'rules' which we had agreed, and letting them know that they could contact me by letter or e-mail. As indicated in chapter 3, we met at lunch times (or over coffee) and food was provided, and time was given for informal discussion prior to the main business and afterwards, the intention being to create a culture of professional trust and mutual respect. All of this was intended to gain their informed consent, and start a process which I felt might strengthen the validity of the data and my findings.

The process of thinking about these meetings, holding them and thinking about them afterwards, was valuable in improving and refining or just simply challenging and changing my own understanding of my purposes. In part this is simply an outcome of the process but it also arose from questions and comments which were made during the meetings. My answers to these questions were important in further establishing my credibility as one of them, an FE insider, but also as an authoritative researcher who as Cooper and McIntyre (1996) suggest, at one and the same time knew about research methods, but was dependent on them (the participants) in finding out more about how they went about doing their job in the classroom, and that I was interested in them as individuals.

Stepping outside my 'normal' role as manager was, I felt, easier in the other colleges than my own. In part, it may simply be that it is often easier to be accepted in another organisation where there is no role conflict and no 'baggage' associated with your substantive job. I do not think that this is (simply) my perception, I was accepted and I think trusted in the other colleges in a way which their own managers would not be and I could not be in my own college. Although, I suspect that particular cases are altogether more subtle and nuanced, and indeed this is my experience also.

In responding to staff questions, I was very aware that I needed, as mentioned earlier to work at maintaining my access and that I could easily upset my relationship with colleagues with one unguarded comment however unintended. I used therefore a mixture of Rodgerian (Rodgers, 1975) counselling methods; empathy, and unconditional positive regard, methods described by Cooper and McIntyre (1996), avoidance of comment or discussion of college 'policy' issues; narrative from my own experience and the literature (trying to avoid 'heavy' referencing, my experience is that colleagues in FE find this to be a turn-off), and affirmation of issues related to confidentiality and anonymity. I was at pains also to emphasise the benefits to them in the longer term, as an individual and team member and in the short term, with, in all cases, an HMIe Review or Follow-up to a Review pending, while at the same time being open about the benefits for myself. By coincidence, all the research colleges were in 2003/04 subject either to a formal HMIe Review or Follow-Up to a Review.

Although it is important to give as much information as possible, in doing so, you cannot assume that colleagues will have the interest, inclination or, far more probably, the time to commit to the task that you may want. You also need to ensure that, where necessary, you have simplified the information you are giving so that you do not either bamboozle them with technical jargon or turn them off and alienate them. It is always going to be more your research project than theirs, unless you can find other ways of motivating them.

I cannot say how much of their obvious enthusiasm and keen-ness was instrumental (having a system of classroom observation and systems for student feedback and discussion of learning and teaching are important self evaluation features in preparing for HMIe Review and in preparing for classroom observation as part of the TQ(FE) programme) how much was down to the fascination which teachers and others seem to have with the subject, and how much down to my enthusiasm for my research. Of course it may just simply be that my perceptions are misleading, but I know it is not the case, from the sheer consistency of my experience in presenting and talking about my research. I think also however that it was important in gaining their trust, and as a

consequence improving the likelihood of getting access to authentic and valid data, that I was at pains to stress that I was interested in what works well, not what works badly; that I was going to be focussing on shared experiences, between observer and observed, with a view to representing the lecturer's story, in the face of decades of government and public criticism; that I was going to be employing open methods which gave primacy to their voice; that my methods although simple were structured around classroom activity and not 'imported' theory or simulation of classroom activity; and that I was overtly interested in helping them to do their job better, in a way which might be sustainable beyond the immediate concerns of gathering data and leaving them to carry on as before.

In saying this, I do not naively think that my intervention was life changing, merely that I would give lecturer participants a way of thinking about their practice which might have longer term benefits should they choose to employ it. The idea of building on strengths as Brown and McIntyre (1996) suggest seems an important counter to a deficit model of teacher (lecturer) in-service training, and a further benefit which I pointed out was the opportunity to discuss good practice leading to a sharing of good practice through team based staff development or the opportunity to reflect on the process in responding to an assignment within the TQ(FE) programme. It was always just more likely that staff would be willing to tell me about what they think are their strengths and to share these with their colleagues, than if I had employed a method which focused on their weaknesses or as HMIe put it, in the jargon of manageriasm "areas for improvement". HMIe follow-up to the Review focuses exclusively on areas for improvement identified during the Review and normally takes place 18 to 24 months after the Review. Although HMIe claim to be interested in the sharing of good practice within colleges they do not include a mechanism within the follow-up process which would "encourage" this. This is seen to be, perhaps correctly, a College responsibility and indeed in general HMIe tend to be reluctant to give advice, except through formal, 'third person' processes.

Having said all of this, I was very aware that as Munn et al (1992) stress, what I was asking lecturers to do in describing their largely routine, automatic process skills -

their teaching craft, was actually very difficult indeed and again I was at pains to ensure that they were aware of this. Of course, being alerted to a challenge is different from actually reacting to it. Indeed, my own experience and that of Munn et al, Brown and McIntyre (1993), Cooper and McIntyre (1996), Morgan and Morris (1999) and Ruddock (1996, 2003) is that pupils and students seem to find it easier to describe what teachers and lecturers do well in helping them to learn than teachers and lecturers do. Perhaps this is explained simply by the situation that pupils and students experience in being pupils and students, whereas teachers and lecturers are not asked and do not think about what they do largely automatically, which seems to go beyond Schön's (1987) "reflection-in-action" in terms of the sheer complexity. Berliner (1988) suggests that teachers tend to focus their attention on the atypical and so find it easier to report their thinking about the exceptional than their usual day to day thinking, and indeed Schon was also much more interested in how teachers deal with problematic situations. Although, at first sight, the task of teaching is rendered deceptively simple by Munn et al's, Brown and McIntyre's and Cooper and McIntyre's models of goals (teacher aims), conditions (time of day, type of student) and actions (what teachers do), their model is able to cope with the complexity of teaching, while retaining a structural clarity.

During the initial meetings my colleagues were largely silent on such matters, and it may simply be that discussion was far more likely following involvement in engaging in the task of writing it up and as part of the validation process or during the phase 2 interviews. Of course the fact that they would have a witness to the process, who would also have to agree the write up was a further challenge which I alerted them to but which they again accepted, in silence. Without the external (HMIe Review) pressures to employ self evaluation process and the benefits for those involved in the TQ(FE) programmes, I wonder however if intrinsic and interested motivation (Ecclestone, 2002) would have led to acceptance to the same extent?

Despite the restrictions and controls on their work, imposed by a performance driven outcome based 'policing' of their task, opportunities to discuss the job systematically



are rare. Perhaps this is why craft knowledge remains, in Bernstein's (1961) terms, a restricted code and remains difficult for teachers and lecturers to articulate to others and themselves. Eraut (1997) suggests that this state of professional craft knowledge is best described as 'tacit', that is, much of it is not made fully explicit because meanings are to an extent shared (but unspoken) and taken for granted. Of course, it might be argued that research into practice which does not include the practitioners' analysis of their 'tacit' understandings is necessarily incomplete (Somekh, 1995) because there are some kinds of human action which can only be described from a phenomenological perspective, i.e. by adopting the point of view of the agent (Elliot, 1980). One of my challenges was to find a way of helping lecturers to describe their craft knowledge, rendering it more accessible to colleagues and themselves. Elliot was very much aware that the routinised behaviour and unquestioned assumptions of practitioners are a serious challenge to changing practice but that tacit understanding at least provides a tool for change, a way of overcoming the constraints of lecturers' traditional craft culture; of overcoming what Argyris and Schön (1996) call "espoused theory", that is, descriptions either based on actual educational theory, or descriptions of what lecturers say they would do "in theory", by gaining access to the ways of working implicit in lecturers' day to day actions.

Of course, it is perhaps not surprising that lecturers find discussing their practice difficult. Their lives within college are spent mostly within the classroom, 'performing' and typically this is for up to 24 hours per week for up to 39 weeks out of the 40 for which they are contracted (plus annual leave). Outwith, there are the demands of preparing, marking and moderating, with precious little time left for reflection and consultation with colleagues. My experience in undertaking the research was that lecturers valued the opportunity to discuss their work and that their craft knowledge seemed to be enhanced in the process. At the same time, lecturers are judged and judge themselves in terms of student outcomes not process and this may simply be more important to them and others than their (lecturer) performance, outwith the special circumstances of a research project which is trying to capture descriptions of day to day practice.

### What did I ask the Lecturing Staff to do?

In this first stage of my research, in common with senior managers and students, I asked lecturers what they thought worked well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the further education classroom. This not only allowed me to compare the responses of lecturers on the basis of subject area, gender and years in post but allowed me to do two further things. Firstly, it allowed me to compare the responses of senior manager, students and lecturers and secondly, allowed me to develop questions for the interviews with lecturing staff in phase 2 of the research.

But in asking lecturers this simple first question, I wanted also to go beyond giving them the opportunity to respond in general terms. Therefore I needed a system which would allow them to report on specific lessons, thus avoiding “espoused theory”, that is, things which they thought they should be doing or would do in ideal circumstances. Hence the system which I used was both a direct and very considered attempt to assist lecturers to describe their actual practice, with all the difficulties this creates and also, for all the reasons I described in my Literature Review, avoiding the problems of basing research on simulations of practice and theory imported from other disciplines.

How could I be sure that I would still not get a set of responses which were not based on what actually happened? Using classroom observation, observation by a third party in the classroom, seemed a useful way forward, in that by having a witness to the events, it was more likely that the responses would be valid. I did not, as a part-time researcher with a full-time job, have the time to conduct the observations myself, so I needed to enlist groups of staff who would act as observers and participants.

At this point, I had the choice of asking the observers to report on what happened or to ask the person being observed to self evaluate and self report. Indeed, as I was writing this chapter, I received an invitation (THK Consulting: 2003) to attend a so called “Lesson Observation Master Class” offered by an Associate OFSTED and

ALI Inspector which claimed to be able to tell me “what constitutes good and poor lessons” and was based on an observer led processes, which would allow me to “develop checklists and make appropriate judgements”. I was sceptical since, for example, Muijs and Reynolds (2001) suggest that in reporting on what students learned during observed classes OFSTED Inspectors are required to display “telepathic powers” and indeed because most observation systems are observer led, that is, it is something which is done to lecturers, they provide at best a snap shot of practice, an example which might be representative or equally may be better or worse than normal practice. However my knowledge of previous research and my own pilot work suggested that turning the observation process on its head, by asking the observed to self report, was possibly more fruitful and sustainable in that it depended on self-reflection and on learning to learn processes. These were also opportunities to construct understandings with a peer which in themselves might help the lecturers involved to understand their own craft knowledge better and to translate their developing knowledge into action. Of course, this was not unproblematic in that I think that what I asked lecturers to do was made even more challenging than the conventional observation processes. The observed had to report on the basis of what was agreed to have happened. That is, the observer had to agree the response. This meant that the process had validation ‘in built’. Only once the response was agreed by both parties could it be sent to me for analysis. In so doing, I was following Day’s (1993) advice that reflection is a necessary but not sufficient condition for professional development, Day suggests that not enough attention is given to the ‘benefits’ of challenges to personal reflection from peers and others.

In summary then, my aim was to create a sustainable process which would assist lecturers through self-reflection (self-reflexiveness) to improve their teaching craft knowledge (self-knowledge) and practice. It was intended also that the process would meet HMIe Self Evaluation criteria for quality improvement, despite the fact that like most HMIe elements, classroom observation is however not usually based on self evaluation but on evaluation by a third-party. Lecturers in each of the four colleges were, as a consequence, asked to work in pairs (or whatever method would work best for them, earlier pilot work had revealed the practical difficulties which

lecturers face in finding time for such activities) but as indicated earlier, instead of following the usual process of observers giving feedback to those observed, the process was reversed with those observed reflecting on what they thought worked well and providing an agreed summary, in writing. The observer's role was one of mentor and counsellor and involved prompting "Why did you do.....?"; "Was that the same as when you did .....?". The observer was not required to offer their own views on what went well as part of the "formal" process although inevitably those observed might have wanted to hear the observers' view. However, although I was only interested in the observed view of "What Went Well?", the observed's report had to be agreed by observer and observed, and this necessarily involved discussion, as already outlined. I hoped therefore, despite trade union unease (although not directed specifically at my work which appears to have led a charmed life perhaps because of its focus on the positive?), as well as being able to offer valuable insights into craft knowledge that I might, as a result of the research, be able to offer colleges a realistic, practical and sustainable system which might have longer term benefits for lecturing staff and for college curriculum teams in that this might improve learning and teaching practice, and might provide a response to HMIe criticism that quality improvement requires to be based on systematic approaches, including individual and team based self-evaluation. By offering these insights alongside those of senior managers and students, I hoped also to influence college policy and learning and assessment strategies.

Although my initial meetings with lecturers from two of the colleges took place in June and August of 2003, I met the third group in early September and it was not until early November that I met the final group. Such are the practical difficulties in identifying participants and the logistical problems of finding suitable dates to meet, leaving aside willingness or not of individuals. Indeed, in her discussion of collaborative research, Kirkwood (1998) stresses the need to work to as long a timescale as possible.

My initial pilot work had taught me also that I could not expect lecturers to see my research as a priority, despite their obvious interest and HMIe and TQ(FE) pressures. In the pilot work I had naively asked them to observe each other 4 times over a 4 week



period. This became twice over a period ranging from 18 to 10 weeks for this research. Although the other studies to which I refer in chapter 2, which were close to my methodology, spent much longer times observing classes and claimed confidence that they were uncovering aspects of craft knowledge because of this, I would however defend the validity of my data on the grounds of the participant, peer data reliability and validity checks which I undertook, including presentations to EdD peers, tutors, FE peers, and HMIE.

In responding, I asked lecturers to complete the proforma I provided (appendix 14), following discussion and agreement with the observer, as soon after the lesson as possible, to aid recall (to make things as simple as possible, I did not ask them to use a tape recorder or take notes) and send it to me in a pre-addressed envelope which I provided, to my home address, using their college mail system. I did not ask them to name themselves but collected information on subject area, gender, and years in post.

All of this was intended to facilitate a high return rate, I had abandoned an earlier version of the response proforma which asked the observer and observed to sign the form. The following extract from my research diary about my pilot work gives an insight into the painstaking detail involved in thinking about all of these issues:

*Haworth and Haddock (1999) discuss the importance of establishing trust with collaborators. So, for example, I took care to write to colleagues from my home address, in an attempt to establish that although this was a research project which inescapably was taking place within the college, it was not part of my managerial task, despite the fact that it was addressing an issue which was important to the college and to the sector; a possibly irreconcilable set of issues? In addition, I used the term 'Colleague' in my correspondence because 'colleague' implies partnership in the process, whereas use of the first name might be seen as too informal, while using the second name might be too formal; 'colleague' providing just enough distance - perhaps?*

#### So, What did the Lecturers say - What Worked Well?

It is an enormous privilege, and still relatively unusual, to be allowed beyond the classroom door. As I indicated earlier, lecturer unions are extremely hostile to classroom observation processes, despite the potential CPD benefits, and this hostility is reflected across other education sectors also. The opportunity to work



with practising lecturers and to discuss with them their day to day work is extremely interesting and exciting. Indeed, as I indicated earlier, the whole point of my approach was to get lecturers to describe what they did routinely, using their own constructs of their taken for granted behaviour in their classroom, to describe what they did which they thought worked well in helping students to learn to pass assessments.

Table 5.3 presents the two lecturer categories at the main construct level, “lecturer-led classroom methodology”, and “lecturer creation of positive affect”. It may be recalled that with the senior manager data, I had classified “lecturer led classroom methodology”, and “lecturer creation of positive effect” as sub-categories within the micro/classroom level factors main category but with the lecturer data I classified them as the main categories. In chapter 7, I discuss why I think that this is justified.

**Table 5.3**

<b>Lecturer Main Construct Categories</b>	<b>% Response</b>
<b>Sample Size: N = 15</b>	
Lecturer-led classroom methodology	79
Lecturer creation of positive affect	21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5.3 demonstrates that in asking lecturers to concentrate on what works well in helping students to pass assessments in the FE classroom they did just that, the majority of their responses refer to their classroom methodology, what they did to affect the students’ cognitive ability to learn to pass assessments. In other words, the task behaviour of lecturers appear, in the eyes of lecturers to be the principal determinant. Having said that however, I am very much aware that this view is created to an extent by the precision of the question which I asked. Table 5.4 for example presents responses from my pilot data where I asked the less precise

question “what works well in helping students to learn in the FE classroom?” (Rather than learn to pass assessment). This data presents a broadly consistent if rather different emphasis, with fewer responses within the broad cognitive category and more in the broad affective category.

**Table 5.4: What works well in helping students to learn in the FE classroom - pilot research project: lecturer responses**

Category	% Response
• Use of classroom management techniques	27
• Creation of an appropriate learning environment	20
• Is helpful, fair and responsive	20
• Use of personal skills	17
• Promotes substantive facts	11
• Links theory to practice	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

The categories “creation of an appropriate learning environment” and “is helpful, fair and responsive” includes data which, when I re-examined it, had it appeared within my thesis research I would have classified under the construct category of “lecturer creation of positive affect”.

Of course, this is a question of balance, the creation of positive affect is something which requires to be present, along with other things in the classroom, in order to help students to learn; even to learn to pass assessments. Muijs and Reynolds for example claim that:

*“a warm, supportive environment has been found to be important to teacher effectiveness, especially in encouraging students to contribute constructively to the lesson. Teachers who are perceived as being understanding, helpful and friendly and show leadership without being too strict have been found to enhance students’ achievement and their affective outcomes, while teachers who come across as uncertain, dissatisfied with their students and admonishing, produce lower cognitive and affective outcomes”. (2001: p58).*

Thus, although my thesis main construct categories are in the proportion of approximately 80% to 20%, the majority being about cognitive rather than affective matters, this is in part I would suggest to do with the precision of the question asked. My earlier pilot work suggests the two same broad categories but in different proportions. Indeed, Morgan and Morris (1999) in asking school pupils why some teachers teach better than others demonstrate two broad categories “to do with classroom practices” and “to do with teacher relationships”. And here the proportions are much closer with 59% cognitive, 37% affective (and 4% to do with other factors), in line with my pilot work. More importantly, classroom practice needs both cognitive and affective aspects and in their day to day practice lecturers are unlikely to distinguish much between them, unless asked specifically to do so.

However, the two main categories were themselves constructed from five sub-categories which in their turn emerged from my initial twenty-six micro categories constructed from the “raw data” of lecturer responses, using the constant comparative method. Table 5.5 presents the three sub-categories for “teacher lead classroom methodology”.

**Table 5.5**

<b>Lecturer led classroom methodology: sub-categories</b>	<b>% Response</b>
Methods of direct preparation for assessment	33
Broad methods facilitating learning for assessment.	30
Other methods with broader learning aims	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>

Taking each of these in turn, “methods of direct preparation for assessment” accounted for 33% of responses and is the largest of all the sub categories. Here I included lecturer responses which appear to be about what they did in a very direct way to help students to learn to pass assessments. That is, things which made a very direct link between what students were learning and what they had to do in order to demonstrate that learning. Here students are being prepared for the process of assessment, they are quite literally being taught to pass summative assessments; the process seems to be what Newton (2000) calls “diagnostic”. That is, it helps students to take remedial action prior to formal assessment. This included revision and mock assessments.

Specific responses included:

**Methods of direct preparation for assessment:**

- *“revision for ‘quick knowledge’ test, the next week on a short ‘bite’ of the course, leading up to unit assessment”.*
- *“first of several practice sessions before assessment” and*
- *“discussion of handouts, clearly stating the PC (performance criteria) to be covered”*

Within the next category “broad methods facilitating learning for assessment”, I included things which were not to do with the specifics of assessment but which had

to do with broader learning, albeit learning with assessment in mind. Although this may seem to artificially distinguish within an overall category of “preparing for assessment” there is in the data a separate and essentially broader set of practices which I have tried to capture which includes explaining things in more depth, clarifying and demonstrating in a broader way, albeit with assessment in mind. In that sense, it is to a limited extent more “formative”, as is the next category in that they describe things which the lecturers are doing to help students to establish where they are in terms of knowledge about the topic. At the same time, however, both categories seem to fall short of a proper integration of assessment within the learning and teaching process and of attempts to develop meta cognitive skills and broader construction of understanding.

Specific responses included:

**Broad methods facilitating learning for assessment**

- *“the demonstration helped to clarify what was required of the students”*
- *“open question session for any problems/misunderstandings of topics taught that day”* and
- *“using visual/practical demonstration, a method of learning which seemed to make students aware of expected standards”*

Within the third category “other methods with broader learning aims”, I tried, as the label suggests, to capture things which had an even broader non-specific relevance but were still about cognitive learning. Here for example I included things which lecturers did which helped to develop broader skills, although, as indicated, the extent to which these might constitute meta cognitive skills and learning to promote understanding is unclear. One of the major problems of relying on this type of data is that it is impossible to probe and clarify. That is of course why I designed my research in two phases, giving the opportunity to return to this type of issue during the subsequent interview phase. What is however clear is that in the phase 1 data there is little sense of a constructivist view of learning emerging from the three



categories, even of what Von Glaserfeld (1995) calls “trivial constructivism” as discussed in my Literature Review. Learning appears within these responses to be about knowledge acquisition, not transformation and construction, and there is no sense of ‘thinking for learning’ or ‘making thinking visible’ (Perkins, Tishman, Ritchhart, Donis, and Andrade, 2000; Perkins and Tishman, 2001).

Specific responses included:

**Other methods with broader learning aims**

- *“I tried to respond to the students as individuals as they were working at different levels”*
- *“short video used for practice, ‘stop/start’ method used to allow students to review what had been watched and their note taking techniques” and*
- *“ensuring students have room to experiment and develop allows achievement at higher levels than necessary”*

Turning now to what lecturers seem to see as the other main category that of “teacher creation of positive effect”; Table 5.6 presents the two sub-categories “encouraging and supportive style” and “relaxed, friendly, approachable style”.

**Table 5.6**

<b>Lecturer creation of positive affect: sub-categories</b>	<b>% Response</b>
Encouraging and supporting style	13
Relaxed, friendly, approachable style	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>

Here again the two sub-categories may seem similar but in distinguishing between them I was able to capture essential differences. Thus in terms of “encouraging and

supportive style” I included comments which appear to be about building confidence and pro-actively seeking to support the student in an affective sense.

Specific responses included:

**Encouraging and supportive style**

- *“I gave positive reinforcement.....”*
- *“allowing students to experiment and repeat exercises and confidence grew .....”* and
- *“I tried to respond, giving individual support, praise and encouragement”*

In comparison, in terms of “relaxed, friendly, approachable style” I tried to capture responses which were about lecturers interacting with students in ways which made it clear that they had respect for their students and were affectively warm towards them. Similarly, Davies (2003) in her description of the experiences of school pupils attending an FE college, to study subjects which could have been taken in school, like Office Studies, emphasises the sense of difference in approach and identifies the importance of tolerance and patience; a relaxed atmosphere, respect and fairness, to learning, and Ecclestone (2002) quotes course leaders within the GNVQ programmes which she reviewed as recognising the importance of a relaxed approach in demonstrating that the students are cared about as people, not simply cared about in terms of academic achievement. That lecturers continue to act in socially authentic ways despite the pressure on them to get students through is much to their credit, although of course an interweave of cognitive and affective methods is also more likely to be successful.

Specific responses included

**Relaxed, friendly, approachable style**

- *“I tried to create a relaxed, working atmosphere .....”*
- *“Establishing an informal and comfortable working relationship with students, where students can approach you” and*
- *“Being approachable enough to allow students to ask for assistance and advice, and offering it when needed”*

As with the views of senior managers, the views of lecturers presented here represent a fascinating glimpse of the views of participants and, in the case of lecturers a glimpse behind the classroom door. What however I was not able to do was to be able to distinguish between the views of lecturers who had been in the job many years, those who were relatively newcomers, those who had recognised teaching qualifications and those who had not, between male and female lecturers or between different subject areas. Although this is in itself important to be able to say, some of this is of course to do with issues of sample size and diversity, and it is for further research to explore how possible it may be to distinguish between these different groupings within the further education lecturer population. Newton (2002) provides a discussion of subject level differences in what he calls teaching for understanding in the schools sector.

As indicated earlier, the views of lecturers offer a different perspective from those of the senior managers which were discussed in chapter 4. I wanted next however, prior to considering the views of students and undertaking a comparison of the views of senior managers, lecturers and students, to explore the views of lecturers in more depth, by asking questions left unanswered from phase 1.

### The Views Of Lecturers Revisited

In order to do this, as with the senior managers, I opted, on balance, to conduct interviews. Bechofer and Paterson (2000) discuss whether or not to include interviews in research design and the alternatives to interviewing which might be adopted. My reasons for interviewing were however not to do with triangulation of data but with the exploration of participants' views in greater depth. However, unlike with the senior managers, I was able to arrange and conduct small focus group interviews because it proved easier to get groups of staff within the colleges together on say a single morning than it did to organise individual interviews, although it proved impossible to get groups of staff from different colleges together. I am of course aware that a trade-off was that, as a consequence, I was gaining access to different sorts of data. The importance of having an influential contact person in each College was confirmed to me when, because one of my college contacts had moved on to another job I was unable, despite many attempts, to get access to lecturing staff within one of the colleges and as a consequence my phase 2 lecturing staff data is based on the results of interviews in 3 out of the 4 colleges.

Although, focus groups provide a different dynamic and require different interviewing skills, Gillham (2000) discusses the issues involved and I think that, as a consequence, I was able to gain access to perceptions which were often the result of what someone else in the group had said, rather than being a series of individual and direct responses to the question I had posed. The interviews felt therefore like naturally occurring discussions through which understandings were constructed. Indeed, although I was very much aware that in such circumstances reliability becomes more problematic than say with fixed response interviews, I very deliberately created a situation in which lecturing staff might feel comfortable. I visited them in their own college, at times which, as far as possible, suited them. We met for coffee or lunch prior to the interview and there was time for informal discussion, opportunity to discuss the phase 1 findings and re-establish the relationship which I had previously formed with them. I had time also to reassure

them about issues of confidentiality and anonymity, particularly as I was using an audio tape to record their responses and to explain that I very much wanted to have a conversation with them, albeit one based around questions which emerged from the phase 1 data. I do not however know if as a result the lecturers were unwilling to discuss issues with me or make responses which they might have, if I had interviewed on a one-to-one basis. It was however perhaps appropriate that in exploring their views on learning I adopted what Knight and Saunders (1999) call a constructivist approach to interviewing. An approach, which I think was assisted by the process of group interviewing, using a style of interviewing which Knight and Saunders term dialogic – the sense in which the interview process becomes a dialogue. Argyris (1990) and Gherardi et al (1998) discuss similar styles of interviewing within the world of Organisational Studies, and Munro (1998) discusses the use of constructivist interview methods with complex and contested issues. The use of a dialogic style of interview seems particularly appropriate given the subject. As Knight and Saunders suggest in discussing this approach in their own work:

*“Since their professional culture is a familiar to them as the air they breath, it was necessary not just to listen but also help informants bring their tacit understanding to the forefront of consciousness. Dialogic interviewing was the way in which we helped them to construct conscious accounts of their working milieux (1999, page 145).*

Given the nature of what I was interested in and the issues and consequences for reliability and validity, I took care to seek comment from the participants following my data analysis. It may be recalled that I emailed the college contacts what I called a reliability and validity review which reported on participants’ responses. The views of non-participants in my own college and from other colleges outwith the research group, were also sought. At a later stage, a draft of my thesis chapters was also provided, and it may be recalled that I discussed my findings with colleagues within the University of Edinburgh Doctorate in Education group and within the Further Education community through 3 separate presentations to 3 different audiences. Although, email responses were disappointingly thin, what I received was positive, in that there was recognition of the validity of the data. During and after the presentations however and before and after the interviews I was faced with



no negative comments or scepticism. On the contrary, I found that colleagues were keen to discuss their views further and to hear what other participants had said, and in particular, lecturers were keen to hear about what students had said about them.

### What is Learning?

I started my interviews by asking the seemingly simple question, what is learning? After a period of silence, the lecturers did have views. These tended however to be fairly simplistic. MacLellan and Sodden (2003) discuss the extent to which there is a mis-match between the Scottish Executive's definition of chartered teacher as an expert in pedagogy and the day-to-day definitions of learning which teachers have. They go on to characterize teachers theories of learning as an eclectic mixture of social, personal and folk psychology. And certainly, the lecturers found this a difficult question. Their responses included technocratic ones, learning being something which helps student to pass assessments, to get a certificate and to get a job, ones which suggested that learning was just part of life, we are learning all the time, and ones which seemed to be about information and knowledge retention and its application.

As one lecturer put it:

*"I was going to say, I can't think of the word but taking on board knowledge in a way that it can be applied to whatever later, I mean its so wide, that you know? I mean, one thing, I always say to students is, it may be that you learn something, you won't remember it all but at least you know later, you've an idea that there is something there that you can go back to and look up again later. You have gained a knowledge that there is knowledge on a subject almost, I know that's starting to get rather deep but I suppose it's the basis of embibing knowledge but its so wide".*

There was discussion also of the sense in which learning is "the stuff they need for their course" but also all the other things outwith, which they think they need and the sense in which lecturers think that they have a role in socialization. There was much comment on the "type of student we are bringing in now" in reference in general to policies of widening access and in particular to recent Scottish Executive policy in

relation to so called “flexibilisation” of the secondary school curriculum, through which so called “disaffected” school age pupils are attending college courses (Scottish Executive, 2004).

But there was mentioned also, albeit to a limited extent, of learning being about giving students a “chance to change” and the extent to which this was seen as more important than what the students learn.

### Effective Learning?

So, in order to explore this a little further, I then asked the lecturers if they felt there was a difference between “learning” and “effective learning.” The responses included speculation about “conscious learning and unconscious learning” and which might be more effective, and responses about learning utility, about the use that can be made of what is learned. There was also the sense in which, it was accepted given the pressures on lecturers and students to meet targets that effective learning was learning which led to passing assessments and was about “people being trained in exams”. Effective learning was also seen as learning which was relevant; there was discussion of the way in which students were said to be good at doing things outwith the classroom which they were interested in “like counting in doing a bookies line or playing darts”. Hughes et al (2000) discuss the extent to which classroom learning can be applied in everyday situations and Nunes et al (1993) discuss how street children in Brazil are able to engage in complicated mental arithmetic without any formal schooling whatsoever, whereas children who learned formally in schools could not always apply it to real life examples.

But there was a sense also of “making a difference” as opposed to a sense of “getting them through”. Ecclestone (2002) discusses the extent to which lecturers in further education colleges see their task as “getting students through”. As one lecturer put it:

*"In the literacy action plan we work towards, we look at outcomes and it is interesting because we thought that this was an additional piece of paperwork that wasn't particularly helpful and it had the areas of life, work, family, what difference has the work made to you and its been amazing how many students have said I can now read the newspaper, I couldn't before or I can read the whole newspaper, I can do this, and its even made me more confident about going out with my friends. Maybe we don't all have the mechanisms for getting this type of feedback, we are lucky, and it's really nice to hear that".*

As with the phase 1 responses there was however little sense of effective learning within what might be characterised as a constructivist account at least beyond "trivial constructivism", that is, that understanding is built up from received pieces of knowledge.

### Teaching Styles?

I wanted to explore also the ways in which lecturers defined the task of teaching and I started by asking them if they thought that they had an identifiable style of teaching. Here emerged glimpses of deep approaches to learning, building on the students' existing knowledge, alongside the recognition of the need to be flexible and recognition of the need to match teaching styles to individual learning style. "I go in knowing what I want to achieve but with 20 in a class they might all get it in 20 ways". There was however little recognition of characterisations of teaching style as either progressive or traditional; Morgan and Morris (1999) used these apparent polarities in their interview questions with their teacher respondents. Despite using the terms in my discussion they were not ones which my lecturer respondents recognised or used in their responses. Instead, they talked about formality and relationships, the need to "turn on a sixpence" and to come up with different solutions for different student groups. A learning support lecturer put it this way:

*"A particular style? We do have a teaching style because we are lucky, we can do a learning style analysis for each student and then we work the resource to that learning style and then see what works. It doesn't always immediately match but we are in the fortunate position of being able to do that, so yes, our style matches the learners style"*

Another lecturer gave a perfect illustration of the sense in which Munn et al (1992), Brown and McIntyre (1993) and Cooper and McIntyre (1996) discuss the ways in which teachers respond to the class, changing what they do in order to achieve what they want to achieve:

*“a lesson plan is organisational, it looks like you are in control but you have to change direction if things don’t work out”.*

### Teaching Strategies which Work Well

In order to make a clear link to my original phase 1 question to the lecturers, I was interested next in confirming with them what they did which they thought works well in helping students to learn. I was initially surprised therefore to find that this was a question which led to more limited responses from the lecturers than the previous questions. However, as recognised in my earlier discussion, teachers and lecturers do find discussion of their largely automatic day-to-day practice difficult. This may be to do with the sense in which craft knowledge is largely tacit (Eraut, 1997) that is, it remains largely taken for granted, unspoken, and unexplored. In asking them to display their knowledge, I was asking them to do something which was unusual for them. A point which as we have seen HMIe consistently make is, of course, that college quality improvement strategies should include processes which encourage teaching teams to discuss their practice. I was aware also however that asking them about their teaching strategies was at a deeper level, a different way of asking them about their teaching styles and on a day-to-day basis lecturers are unlikely to distinguish between the two.

So what did they say? As might be expected, lecturers covered some of the ground they and their peers did in their responses to my research question within phase 1. There was mention of discussion, Fox (1995) describes the effective use of discussion in classroom learning, the use of demonstrations, adapting strategies to suit the group and using different styles with different groups, and mention of using more able students to help the less able. But there was discussion also of “guiding”

students of “no longer being in full control”. This seemed to be something which worked better with older students rather than younger ones. There was also a sense of difference within subject areas. As one lecturer put it:

*“I am completely different from the rest because I have the advantage of teaching a creative subject, so it is really important things like informality, relaxed atmosphere and also the ability to change things because a lot of the time you are dealing with students producing creative work and if you’ve got a dozen students in front of you, you have got 12 different solutions being arrived at, so you really have to take that into account, all the time you’ve got to be aware of it, that the students are not working together although they are all working together they are not working together in a sense, they all have personal journeys, if you like”.*

The latter part of this quotation reveals one of very few examples of a complex, constructivist view whereby students are arriving at their own destinations, taking their own routes. Even however where learning was individualised within the discussion of effective learning, teaching strategies and teaching styles, learning seems to be more likely to be concerned with getting individual students through than with the development of constructivist approaches and meta skills.

### “Best” Lessons?

My next question produced a lot of laughter and silence, in that in seeking to better understand craft knowledge, self knowledge I asked lecturers about techniques which they felt contributed to a lesson being defined as a really good lesson. In fact I went on to ask lecturers to tell me about their best lesson. Following the silence and comments like “I think you’ll have to go to another team now” lecturers talked very openly about their practice, although what emerged was descriptions of “best” and “worst” practice, in that good lessons were often said to have emerged from bad ones. It was clear also that lecturers were not used to talking about good and best practice and found this difficult and embarrassing. It is interesting that an emerging criticism from HMIE is that good practice is seldom shared within colleges. In fact, the Funding Council and HMIE have set up mechanisms for sharing best practice between colleges through so called “best practice events” but it is up to individual



colleges to share good practice within. My own experience is that college staff are reluctant to talk about their practice with others through a mixture of genuine modesty, unwillingness to be seen to be “bragging” about what they do and very often a failure to recognise that what they do on a day-to-day basis might be characterised as good or best practice.

In responding to this question lecturers talked about the use of humour, it may be recalled that this was missing from their written accounts, use of demonstrations, particularly breaking demonstration down into smaller “bite-size” pieces, and interactive practical work. One lecturer put it this way:

*“I can give you a good lesson – in European Studies, we talked about what people would eat in France for a snack and we made it and then we ate it and they all thought it was wonderful because you had discussion about it, then you had this sort of practical aspect, then the end result – the enjoyment – and I am not being facetious but that was.....”.*

But there was a lot of also self deprecation and of admitting mistakes. Lecturers talked about having a good lesson because their initial plan hadn’t worked and by admitting mistakes getting the students trust. They talked about bad lessons. These often involved having to “cover” for someone else. In further education colleges it is normal practice for lecturers to “cover” the lessons of absent colleagues. Students are not left to learn by themselves, as is the case in such circumstances in higher education, although the value of, as it were, a lecturer “babysitting” or “sitting in” is doubtful. Through all the comments it is however interesting that a lecturer is seen as critical to student learning, indeed, throughout the lecturer responses, there is little sense of the social construction of learning, and students coming to their own meaning within a community of practice.

### Whose Responsibility is it?

With this in mind, I ended my “discussion” with the lecturers by asking them who they thought was responsible for ensuring that students learn to pass assessment. The majority of lecturers saw it as a balance between themselves and the students. As one put it “it’s a not quite 50:50 partnership, with the balance being on the student”. At the same time there was a sense in which lecturers saw it as their responsibility to let students know if they felt that they were not ready for assessment. Within the “continuous” FE assessment system, it is quite common for students to make a request for an assessment when they think that they are ready for it, although this is not uniformly the case. Lecturers talked about “leading the horse to water” and their role in “putting the knowledge in”. Differences were seen between older and younger students, the older ones being more likely to think that the responsibility lay with themselves. There was sense also in which class sizes seemed to make a difference. “The more students you have, the more it is up to the students”. As Ecclestone (2002) suggests, however, lecturers do recognise their responsibilities and felt uncomfortable about the extent to which it was simply up to the student. As one lecturer put it:

*“We have had issues recently with students. You have built a good rapport in the past with them and they worked incredibly hard on their own and studied at home but recently maybe haven’t studied so much, and you feel incredibly guilty because you have given the additional support and they aren’t passing. Then we have this discussion, you know, should we put more effort in? But if the students are not putting any effort in, then you can’t do it, they have got to take responsibility”*

In general then, responsibility for learning to pass assessments was seen by lecturers as something which overall they shared with students, although of course, there was evidence also of differences in the extent to which all students could be treated in the same way and the extent to which all lecturers could be held responsible in all circumstances.

In summary lecturers' responses to the phase 1 question, what works well fell into two main categories. Firstly, lecturer led classroom methodology or cognitive factors accounted for 79% of responses and within this sat 3 sub-categories; direct preparation for assessment, broad methods facilitating assessment, and other broader learning aims. Secondly, 21% of the lecturer responses identified affective factors, within which sat 2 sub-categories; encouraging and supportive style, and relaxed, friendly, approachable style. In response to the phase 2 questions, lecturers discussed their views of learning which were mainly technocratic, and their approaches to teaching, which were differentiated for individual students and for older as opposed to younger students. They also discussed best practice in terms of poor practice and finally they shared their views on who, themselves or students was responsible for student learning, which displayed difference according to class size and age of students and a degree of discomfort about handing over responsibility to students entirely.

As with the senior managers, given the policy context which framed my research and the consequent pressures on them to meet and exceed managerialist targets, the responses of lecturers seem perfectly reasonable but in completing my work with senior managers and lecturing staff, I was of course interested to find out how their perceptions would compare with those of other major participants, the students, and it is to their views that I turn next.

## CHAPTER 6

### **“Rigger Boots and Bare Mid-rifts: the students:- what works well ?**

#### Introduction

Scotland's further education students are an extremely diverse group. Although, a colleague describes them as identifiable by their “rigger boots” (mostly male) and “bare mid-rifts” (mostly female) Gleeson and Shain (1999) describe FE students, albeit that they are discussing FE students in England, as “an impossibly diverse clientele”. Unlike their counterparts in the higher education sector, they are more likely to be part-time; have been born and brought up near the college they attend; live within 4 miles of it; have lived near it before they attended it; be from a socially deprived area - as defined by postcode; be from a “working class” background; have a formal record of educational need; have few or no educational qualifications prior to coming to college; have been unemployed prior to college attendance; be a single parent or from a single parent family; and be mature, that is, over 25 years of age; and be female. Although classifications such as “working class” are now more problematic, given two decades of industrial decline and dislocation in Scotland, Crouch (1999) suggests that class is still a more powerful predictor of educational, and employment outcomes than say gender and or race. Male and female occupational aspirations at 16, as demonstrated by enrolment on vocational courses are however striking different.

**Table 6.1. Top eight female and male occupations at 16.**

<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Teacher	Armed Forces
Clerical	Joiner
Nurse	Mechanic
Nursery Nurse	Teacher
Hairdresser	Police
Secretary	Fireman
Shop Assistant	Architect
Social Worker	Computing

Furlong and Biggert (1999)

And, although the message promoted through policy discourse is that the route to personal success is through qualifications, individual effort and aspiration (for example, SFEFC, 2004b), structural and gender barriers persist. Finance, poverty, unemployment, lack of childcare, travel difficulties, and low educational attainment and negative experience of schooling remain significant reasons for non-participation in further education and training programmes (Gallacher et al 2000)

In academic year 2001/2002 (Association of Scottish Colleges: 2002) 72% of Scottish Further Education College student enrolments were part-time (that is, only



28% were full-time) a mixture of part-time day, evening, community, distance learning, workplace learning, flexible learning, online learning, and short course delegates. Of these, over half, 57%, were women, 59% were over 25 years of age and 25% were from areas of “high deprivation”; Scotland’s 20% most deprived areas as defined by postcode. In terms of qualifications, around 13% of the almost 515,000 students enrolled were studying at higher education level (Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma) although, the quality of HE courses in FE colleges is contested (Field, 2004) but 67% of students entering college that year had no qualifications at all. 88% enrolled on vocational, job related, programmes and there were around 1 million entries for SQA qualifications. The most popular college courses were Information Technology, 22% of all enrolments, followed by Care and Personal Development, 15% of all enrolments. There were just over 3,200 students enrolled from other European countries and around 2,000 from other overseas countries.

Table 6.2 gives a breakdown of student enrolments in 2001/2002 (SFEFC, 2003). (A gender breakdown of enrolments is given in table 4.1)

**Table 6.2. National Figures for Student Enrolments by Age, Level of Programme and Mode of Attendance 2001-2002.**

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Under 18 years	22,408	85,107	107,515	4,440	1,112	5,552	26,848	86,219	113,067
18 - 20 years	8,844	26,681	35,525	11,047	4,734	15,781	19,891	31,415	51,306
21 - 24 years	3,657	25,679	29,336	4,134	4,483	8,617	7,791	30,162	37,953
25 - 40 years	7,695	122,846	130,541	6,416	6,416	17,499	14,111	140,345	154,456
41 and over	2,609	145,43	147,752	1,583	8,684	10,267	4,192	153,827	158,019
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45,213</b>	<b>405,456</b>	<b>450,669</b>	<b>27,620</b>	<b>36,512</b>	<b>64,132</b>	<b>72,833</b>	<b>441,968</b>	<b>514,801</b>

## Macro Level Social and Economic Background

Although further education colleges in Scotland have, in the decade since they were incorporated, been highly successful in “growing their market” particularly in attracting students from deprived areas, they have done so against a background of significant social and labour market change. The latter contributing to potential fractures in what Hodkinson et al (1994) call people’s “horizons for action”, what Bourdieu (1994) calls ‘habitus’. That is, their perception of what may be possible for them. Thus, although lifestyles and careers have become more individualised, what Hartly (1997) calls “narcissistic”, and diverse, and while opportunities within further and higher education have expanded massively, they have done so against a background of the demise of traditional community based industries, for example, heavy and light engineering, farming and mining, and those industries that remain are much less labour intensive than they once were and tend to require higher skill levels. At the same time, there has been a proliferation of retail and catering outlets and jobs in ‘tourism’ offering low paid, low status jobs with high turn-over, ‘unsocial hours’ and seasonal employment which require little or no training. So although there are now more career possibilities than ever before, Coffield (1999) suggests that policies of widening access and lifelong learning transfer responsibility for becoming and remaining employable onto individuals and to educational institutions - and away from Government. It may be over optimistic to expect that more people with better qualifications will in itself lead to better economic performance, a key role for FE colleges in the eyes of the government, and although at individual level qualifications are still important in terms of salary level and security of employment, there has been no corresponding expansion of elite jobs.

As a consequence, many further education college students, particularly those sponsored through Local Enterprise Company and Central Government Training Schemes, have extremely fragile “horizons for action”, are likely to have had previous experience of failure in education and the job market and are unlikely to wish to defer gratification beyond the immediate confines of their course. As a result, they are more vulnerable to risk and uncertainty, and are more likely to drop

out (Ecclestone: 2002). Progression routes into and beyond further education under these circumstances are therefore not simply the product of choice or decision making processes within the type of idealised long term “rational planning agent” model implicit in much public policy on careers decision making (Hodkinson, 1998). As Davies (2003) puts it, there is no simple casual relationship between advice and career choice. Thus, although much recent social and educational policy and legislation was designed to address the very inequalities which I describe, (see for example, Scottish Office, 1999a, b and c and; Scottish Executive, 2000, 2003b and c). And although FE has a better record than HE in attracting under-represented groups, such as those from more disadvantaged social backgrounds and low participation neighbourhoods (Raab and Davidson, 1999; Tinklin and Raffe, 1999; Tinklin, 2000; Osborne et al, 2000; Morgan-Kline, 2002) it may well be that structural factors have merely changed their form, becoming increasingly obscure and fragmented, and that the greater range of educational opportunities available obscures also the reproduction, albeit in different ways, of patterns of inequality. Given these macro circumstances, I was of course interested in how this would affect students’ approaches to assessment at the micro level.

### The Local Social and Economic Background

In common with much of Central Scotland, the local areas which the ‘research colleges’ serve present a very mixed social and economic picture, with areas of relative affluence, high employment levels and high economic activity, alongside areas of severe deprivation. The latter characterised by high levels of debt, high levels of unemployment, low levels of economic activity, chronic ill health, low birth rates and high early death rates, high percentages of children receiving free school meals, low car ownership levels and so on. Such areas of severe deprivation currently attract funding under the Scottish Executive, Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) Programme, which provides funding for a broad range of social and economic interventions, including employment initiatives, training programmes, and health promotion initiatives.

Local labour market data (Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley, 2003) demonstrates that although the 2001 employment rate across the college areas ranges from 3.5% to 4.5% (with a Scottish average of 3.9%) there are also pockets of very high unemployment within SIP areas and among those aged 16 - 24 in particular, where the range in 2001 was 25% to 30%, with a Scottish average of 28%. In addition, people who were classified as long term unemployed, that is, those unemployed for more than 6 months, accounted for around 32% of all unemployed in 2001 across the college areas. In terms of population statistics, growth across all the areas which the colleges serve is predicted but ranges from 0.8% to 9.4%; the latter the highest rate of growth across the whole of Scotland. Although predominantly urban, the colleges also serve rural areas particularly to the west and north of the central belt and to the west of Edinburgh.

Lastly, the areas which the colleges serve had seen the same sort of changes to patterns of employment as most of the rest of Scotland and much of the UK, characterised, as indicated earlier, by the decline of traditional community based industries and the growth of work in industries such as electronics and the service sector, including retail, catering and tourism. The research colleges were therefore located within communities which to a large extent faced a similar set of social and economic challenges as those faced by communities across the central belt of Scotland and beyond.

### The Students in the Research Colleges

How typical were the students in the research colleges? As with my other “how typical” questions throughout the thesis, although I was as interested in the local and contingent as I was in generalisability, at the same time I did not want my student group to be idiosyncratic and unrepresentative. I was however, as I have explained earlier, not able to demand from each college what might be recognised in the positivist research tradition as a statistically representative sample. This was because I was relying on college contacts to provide access to students and lecturers and given both micro-political (Ball, 1987) and logistical features, my access to students



was effected primarily through my access to staff. Specifically, the staff who agreed to become involved in the research project also agreed to effect student responses from the student groups which they taught. Having said that, because my staff group taught a broad range of students in terms of subject area and level of study, I was in turn enabled to gain access to a broad range of students, studying a broad range of subjects at a number of different levels. This included students who were studying HN Art and Design, HN Social Care, NQ Electronics, NQ Computing, ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence, a broad ranging introductory level IT qualification), HN Computing, Access to Nursing, Access to Higher Education, NQ Art and Design, NQ Care Support and NQ Health Care. As indicated earlier, this group included therefore some of the most popular subject areas in the FE college curriculum as defined by enrolments in 2001/2002 academic year (IT 22% and Care and Personal Development 15%). Although, this meant it was unlikely that I would discover significant differences between subject areas, I might be more able to generalise across subjects and more importantly the lecturers and students, because access to students was effected through the lecturers, would to an extent be reflecting on shared experiences; an important methodological advantage discussed by Brown and McIntyre (1993).

I indicated earlier that the students in the research colleges represented in numerical terms around 10% of all Scottish students, and that the lecturers involved taught a broad range of subject areas including those teaching core skills. The core skills, particularly communication, numeracy and IT form an important part of certificated college programmes, particularly full time and day release courses and have been identified by HMIE in Scotland as important in helping students to succeed in their vocational curriculum area (HMIE: 2004), although the way this works is not explained. Apart from students with special educational needs and additional learning support needs whom I excluded for ethical and methodological reasons, my student group were therefore broadly representative of the further education curriculum. In addition, in relation to both age range, (the youngest was 15, the oldest 72; 62% were 25 and over, against a sector total of 59% in 2001/2002) and gender balance (males were more likely to be studying electronics and computing



and females, social subjects, care and access to nursing) there was nothing idiosyncratic or unusual about the students who responded. They were, as far as it is possible to say this about any 'group' of individuals, typical of further education students in general. They included mature adult returners in their 40s and 50s and individuals below statutory school leaving age, and over 50% were female, 57%, exactly the same proportion as the sector in 2001/2002. I did not however collect post code data, so I am unable to say how typical they were in respect of social and economic background, except that the very "randomness" of the "sample" would suggest that they would be unlikely to be unrepresentative. Table 6. 3 gives a more detailed breakdown.

**Table 6.3 Student Respondents: Gender, Age and Level of Programme of Study**  
**Sample Size: N = 134**

(Note: Age not disclosed 2; Gender not disclosed 2)

Age	FE Female	FE Male	FE All	HE Female	HE Male	HE All	FE&HE Female	FE&HE Male	Total
Under 18	12	11	23	0	1	1	12	12	24
18-20	3	7	10	1	3	4	4	10	14
21-24	3	7	10	1	0	1	4	7	11
25-40	29	11	40	7	5	12	36	16	52
41 +	15	6	21	2	6	8	17	12	29
Total	62	42	104	13	15	28	75	57	134

More broadly, across the areas which the colleges serve, although over 3 million people live within just one hours travel time by car, over 90% of students in the research colleges lived within 10 kilometres of the college they attend. With the exception of two of the colleges there is no significant evidence of students travelling beyond this distance, and this only to access courses which other, nearer colleges did not offer (SFEU: 2003).

### What Did I Ask the Students to do?

As with the other participant groups, in seeking the views of students, I was of course interested, in the extent to which the neo-liberal policy context which framed my research would influence their attitudes to learning, teaching and assessment. It might be anticipated for example that although students would continue to exercise agency they would to an extent share a common interest with lecturers, managers, colleges, employers and the state. A number of studies have highlighted the connection between the reconstruction of education and the more overt commodification of students and the increased adoption of narrow, instrumentalist and didactic pedagogic practices ( Woods et al., 1997; Smyth and Shacklock, 1998; and Gewirtz, 2000). In addition students are valued in terms of what they can offer colleges financially and in terms of success in their courses and articulation to higher level courses or progression into or within the job market. As Gewirtz suggests:

*'In this way, students have become objects of the education system, to be attracted, excluded, displayed and processed according to their commercial and semiotic worth...' (2000, page 315)*

I was interested in such circumstances therefore in the extent to which this would affect classroom work, the relationships between participants and the attitudes and aspirations of students.

My research question was of course a device for unpacking how learning, teaching and assessment was being shaped by the policy context. I wanted to be able thereby to compare the views of lecturers, students and of course senior managers, although of course I had asked lecturers to respond following an observed lesson, in order to improve validity and to give lecturers an opportunity to become more aware of to their day to day practice. This was because, as discussed earlier, previous research suggests how difficult it is for lecturers to discuss their routine, largely automatic ways of working.

In order to gain access to the views of students, I asked each of the lecturers who were involved in the research within each of the colleges to ask one of their groups of students to respond. Students were told that as part of a project aimed at enhancing learning and teaching in their college, the college was interested in what worked well in helping them to learn in the classroom; the classroom was defined as a workshop, salon, kitchen, computer lab etc, as well as in a conventional sense. The students were issued with a response form, towards the end of a class and were asked to complete the form in class. Specifically they were asked to think about lecturers who were best at getting them to learn, to pass assessments. They were told not to name lecturers but in the space provided, and if necessary on the reverse side and additional sheets, write down separately for each lecturer what they did which helped them to learn, to pass assessments. They were told specifically to write down only what works well, not what works badly, for them. Students were not required to give their name and were asked to answer honestly, in the interest of themselves and future students. They were told also that when all the students in a class had completed the form it would be collected by one member of the class, placed in an envelope and sealed. The envelope was addressed to myself, at my home address, and by prior arrangement it was then sent to me via the college postal system. These methodological details were important I think in improving the likelihood that I would get valid and reliable data. In so doing I was following as far as possible methods employed by Munn et al (1992) and Brown & McIntyre (1993) but one point of difference is that they asked the pupils to name the teachers. I did not because I was worried that this would lead to lecturers withdrawing from the research. What is clear, however is that the students, like the pupils in the schools based research, treated the exercise seriously. The responses are thoughtful and articulate and generally longer than the responses of senior managers or lecturers. In only one case in this, or in my pilot work, did I come across any response which had to be excluded because it named a lecturer or focused on what did not work well, or had to be excluded for any other reason. As far as I could tell, the students took the task seriously and tried very hard to explain what it was that their lecturers did which helped them to learn, to pass assessments.

### What Works Well for Students?

So, what did the students say, what worked well for them? Table 6.4 summarises the main construct categories and percentage responses for the students.

**Table 6.4**

<b>Student Main Construct Category</b>	<b>% Response</b>
<b>Sample Size: N= 134</b>	
Lecturer led classroom methodology	78
Lecturer creation of positive affect.	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

My initial concern that the student main construct categories looked almost identical to the lecturer main construct categories, both in terms of general categorisation and in terms of proportion of responses were to an extent allayed by six related factors. Firstly, I returned to the data on a number of occasions over an extended period of time, trying to come to it fresh, and came up with the same outcomes each time. Secondly, the sub category proportions are different and in the case of “lecturer creation of positive affect” there is an additional student sub category. Thirdly, although I was aware that other researchers coming to the data fresh might come up with different proportions, they would only do so within limits and I am confident that they would not come up with a third or fourth main construct. I am confident about this because of my validation and reliability checks (Appendix 16 to 22, inclusive) which involved asking the participants and other practitioners to comment on the categories using the method outlined in Chapter 3. Fourthly, I shared and discussed my phase 1 data and findings with 4 different audiences, including HE, FE and HMIe colleagues. Next, my categories and their proportions are consistent with FE student reasons quoted by Ecclestone (2002) for opting for GNVQ programmes, 77.4% were qualification related, the remainder affect related. Lastly, both my pilot

work and the work of Brown and McIntyre (1993) identifies similar categories, although in the case of Brown and McIntyre, they do not report on the proportion of responses within each category. This is important, in that these proportions may be likely to change given different research questions and given the complexity of classroom teaching, context, students, subject areas, time of day, time of year etc. What is important, however, is the consistency of the categories. Table 6.5 presents the outcomes of my pilot work.

**Table 6.5 What is it that lecturers do that helps students to learn in the FE classroom? - pilot research project: student responses**

Category	% Response		
• Develops mature relationships with students	21	}	41
• Help with student difficulties	20		
• Develops independent learning	14	}	59
• Facilitates learning of substantive facts for assessment purposes	12		
• Facilitates learning in a wider sense	11		
• Retains control and is well organised	11		
• Raises students' expectations of themselves	4		
• Good facilities are provided	4		
• Other	4		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>		

As with the lecturers in my pilot work, I asked the students in my pilot work a less precise question about learning in general in the classroom. The first 2 categories “develops mature relationships with students” and “help with students’ difficulties” are however composed of responses many of which I would have categorised as “lecturer creation of positive affect” had they occurred within my thesis research and the remaining 59% contain many responses which I would have categorised as



“lecturer led classroom methodology” had they occurred in my thesis research. The proportions are different but the categories at the macro level in terms of an interweave of cognitive and affective factors are the same.

Similarly, table 6.6 presents Brown & McIntyre’s (1993) analysis of what primary and secondary pupils in Scotland said when asked “what is it that teachers do well?”

**Table 6.6 : Brown and McIntyre : What is it that pupils say their teachers do well?**

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Creation of a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere in the classroom.</li><li>2. Retention of control in the classroom.</li><li>3. Presentation of work in a way which interests and motivates pupils.</li><li>4. Providing conditions so pupils understand the work.</li><li>5. Making clear what pupils are to do and achieve.</li><li>6. Judging what can be expected of a pupil.</li><li>7. Helping pupils with difficulties.</li><li>8. Encouragement of pupils to raise their expectations of themselves.</li><li>9. Development of personal, mature relationships with pupils.</li><li>10. Teachers’ personal talents (subject - related or other).</li></ol> |
|--|

(1993: pages 328/29)

Although, Brown & McIntyre’s question is far more general, it produces a range of categories which are similar to those within my pilot research project and as we shall see within the sub categories within my thesis research. All of which, together with the other research which I discuss within my literature review, gives a significant degree of confidence in the validity to my findings. What is of course interesting however is not only the degree of generalisability from school to further education and from further education to school, but also the particularity of the responses of further education students when asked what helps them to learn, to pass assessments.

Turning now to the sub categories, Table 6.7 presents the sub categories for the main construct category” lecturer led classroom methodology”. In Chapter 7, I discuss the differences between the views of all the principal participants. It will however be obvious that the students appear to value “broad methods facilitating learning for assessment” differently from lecturers and higher than all the other sub categories, although of course only 1% above “methods of direct preparation for assessment”. In fact, these sub categories together account for over 60% of all responses. That is, students appeared to favour both formative and diagnostic feedback, but as with the lecturer responses, this seems to fall short of assessment being integrated into the learning and teaching process or of students developing learning to learn strategies, learning for understanding or learning for thinking, in that it seems to be more to do with accumulating knowledge of given facts. In relation specifically to the “broad methods” category, I included lecturer strategies which students said helped them to learn for assessment but were not direct preparation for assessment.

**Table 6.7**

<b>Lecturer led classroom methodology: Sub-categories</b>	<b>% Response</b>
Broad methods facilitating learning for assessment.	31
Methods of direct preparation for assessment.	30
Other methods with broader learning aims.	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>78</b>

Specific responses included:

**Broad methods facilitating learning for assessment**

- *“Very specific regarding what she is looking for, gives you a timetable for you to work within from the outset.”*
- *“The homework is a bonus point, it lets you reflect on the subject covered during the day”. and*
- *“This lecturer is very good because she explains everything in minute detail, in words that can easily be understood and she puts 100% effort into it”.*

Whereas the “broad methods” sub-category accounts for 31% of responses, “methods of direct preparation” accounts for 30%. Here I included references to what appears to be diagnostic processes (as described by Newton: 2000) which are about examination practice, revision and mock examinations, and as with the “broad methods” category, homework seems to be an important factor. The emphasis on homework is interesting in that Hughes and Greenhough (2004), and Muijs and Reynolds (2001) both indicate that the use of homework is not unproblematic, in that what appears to be important is giving feedback immediately, making homework an integral part of what goes on in the classroom and linking homework to work outwith the institution. And it was these aspects which students reported on and seemed to value most in their responses in both categories.

In terms of “direct preparation for assessment”, responses included:

**Methods of direct preparation for assessment**

- *“Mock examinations and feedback on what we did well and what we need to work on”.*
- *“Explaining what is expected of me and what information is required”. and*
- *“I find it helpful when lecturers go over past work before an assessment as it allows questions to be answered on anything you are unsure about”.*

The final sub category within this main construct “other methods with broader learning aims” accounts for 17% of responses and here I included comments which were to do with learning but not direct learning for assessment purposes. Although the responses appear to be about formative work, it is unclear if students are referring to the development of meta skills. As with the lecturer responses, there are only glimpses within responses of things which may be to do with high level learning skills, rather than specific skills and knowledge. What is clear however is that as with the senior manager and lecturer responses, there is little sign in the student phase 1 data of constructivist approaches to meaning construction and knowledge transformation or the development of thinking skills, and this is the understandable, given the policy context.

Specific responses included:

**Other methods with broader learning aims**

- *“Having handouts organised in such a way that I don’t have to panic about it”.*
- *“The lecturer demonstrating what is to be done in addition to describing the task”. and*
- *“Looking at the subject as part of a bigger picture”.*

As I have indicated, the importance of good working relationships between pupils and teachers and students and lecturers is one which is consistently reported on within the research literature. Most of the studies identify classroom climate as an important concomitant of student achievement both in Europe (Muijs and Reynolds, 1999; Mortimore et al, 1988) and in the USA (Brothy and Good, 1986; Rosenshine, 1979). Similarly, Fraser’s (1994) review of 40 studies on the effects of classroom climate found achievement to be closely related to learning environment. It is no surprise therefore that lecturers and students reported on what I have called “teacher

led creation of positive affect”. This main construct category accounted for 21% and 22% respectively of lecturer and student responses.

Table 6.8 presents the sub-categories for the student responses in relation to lecturer created positive affect. 10%, almost half of student affective responses refer to what I have called a “relaxed, friendly approachable style”. Here I included things which the lecturer did to make it easier for the student to seek help and assistance.

**Table 6.8**

<b>Teacher led creation of positive affect: Sub-categories</b>	<b>% Response</b>
Relaxed, friendly, approachable style.	10
Encouraging and supportive style.	6
Enthusiastic, humorous, fun and enjoyable style.	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>

Specific responses in relation to a “relaxed, friendly, approachable style” included:

<p><b><u>Relaxed, friendly approachable style</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“In my Maths class my lecturer is very approachable..... if I don't understand, he will spend time with me until I do”.</i></li> <li>• <i>“Sociology and French, as well as the Computing lecturers are easy to relate to and are easy to communicate with”. and</i></li> <li>• <i>“Very approachable, relaxed, teaching style, and being around people who treat you nice, being away from school, getting treated like an adult”.</i></li> </ul>
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The specific comment “being treated like an adult” is one which surfaced again and again within my pilot study, but was not so prevalent within the thesis work. This is



why within Table 6.5 I describe one of my pilot study categories as “develops mature relationships with students”. I cannot explain why it is not so prevalent within the thesis study but this may again have something to do with the more specific question which I asked?

Being encouraging and supportive is a theme which did however surface within the student responses and what I describe as having an “encouraging and supportive style” accounts for 6% of all responses. Although this again may seem like fine nuancing, there is something more proactive and dynamic here than what I captured under the “relaxed, friendly .....” category.

Specific responses included:

**Encouraging and supportive style**

- *“In Maths, I struggled at first but the lecturer explained and spent time coaching me and now I am confident in my abilities”.*
- *“In one of my classes, I have a very patient, kind and helpful lecturer. She involves everyone in her class to take part”. and*
- *“Always has time to discuss ideas, even though he is working with other classes”.*

The last comment is particularly interesting because it seems to imply that although I was specifically interested in what happened in the classroom, what lecturers do to support students and encourage them outwith the classroom is important also. And of course it is highly likely that students do not greatly differentiate between what happens in the classroom and what happens outwith the classroom, in relation to affective relationships.

The final sub category of responses is having an “enthusiastic, humorous, fun and enjoyable style”. Learning is of course at one level a serious business but need not be without humour. Indeed, the research literature which I have described is rich in description of the importance of keeping a balance between control and humour. In Table 6.6, Brown & McIntyre (1993) identify the “retention of control in the classroom” along side the “development of personal, mature relationships with pupils” as being important, and Munn et al (1992) focus on the elements of effective discipline, including the use of humour. Making learning enjoyable seems so obvious, yet overall it accounts for only 6% of student responses, and was missing entirely from lecturer accounts.

Specific responses included:

**Enthusiastic, humorous, fun and enjoyable style**

- *“The more enthusiastic the teacher the better the classes is taught as their enthusiasm rubs off on us and you can take a lot more if you enjoy the subject”.*
- *“Finding a balance between fun and hard work is good for class morale; willing to share jokes and not keep themselves apart”. and*
- *“My lecturer was a warm, bubbly, caring person who got the best from us due to the way she conducted herself, I enjoyed the full experience”.*

Having analysed and categorised the student data however, as with the lecturer responses, what I was not able to identify was any significant differences in terms of college responses, level of study, gender, age of student or of subject area, except in so much as electronics students were more laconic than their peers. Although in itself, it is important to be able to say that there were no significant differences at inter group level, it may very well be, as I indicated in my discussion of the lecturer data, that this was very much to do with the broad range of lecturers and students I asked. Had I been able to get access either to lecturers and students within one or two subject areas as Cooper and McIntyre (1996) did, or had I been able to get access

to a very much larger “sample” of lecturers and students I may have been able to discern differences across gender, age etc. On the other hand, being able to identify common themes across a broad range is important also. As a part time researcher working on my own, I did not have the resources to undertake a large scale research project, Munn et al (1993) report on the work of a research team over a 3 year period. Nor was I able to choose my participants, given the sensitivity and logistical issues involved. As with the lecturers and senior managers however, I did have the opportunity, given the small scale nature of my work to return in phase 2 of the project to discuss with students the implications of what they had said, in phase 1 for effective learning, teaching and assessment.

Collecting and analysing the views of students is clearly important in understanding how students learn and how lecturers and senior managers within colleges can help students to learn to pass assessments. Helping students to pass assessments, gain qualifications and move on to employment or to further study is one of the principal “missions” of further education in Scotland and beyond, and indeed features in the Mission statements and other documents of many colleges. Indeed, I have been responsible for writing such documents for the college for which I work. It is also assumed unproblematically that students share these aims, and the serious minded responses which I received from students to my research question seems to confirm what is very much a late modern project. If I asked different questions I may of course have got different responses, students attend college for a wide variety of reasons beyond the simple and technocratic. Having said that however, in confining my research to one specific area of college life, albeit an important one, I was interested in the fractures between the views of the principal participants. Prior to that however I was interested in exploring student views in more depth, through the focused interviews which formed phase 2 of my research.

### The Views of Student Revisited

In bringing together students, I cannot of course say to what extent my contacts were influenced by worries about particular students disclosing things to me which they

would prefer they did not but I relied on the relationship which I had built up with them as reassurance that my code of conduct was genuine. Although, at the outset I had intended to interview students in all four colleges, as with the lecturers, the loss of my contact in one of the colleges meant that I had to abandon my original plan and concentrate on interviewing students in three of the four colleges. Like the lecturer interviews, the student interviews were all conducted with focus groups, although again as with the lecturers it was not possible to arrange to bring together students from different colleges. In arranging the interviews, a mixture of pressures on my diary and the availability of students, outwith class time and more generally meant that I had to rely upon my contacts to bring together those students who were willing and whose other commitments allowed them time to meet me at the agreed time and on the agreed date in a group of up to 5, and this proved difficult enough within colleges without attempting to make arrangements between colleges. My experience with lecturers had “taught” me that such focus groups are likely to be a useful means of interactively stimulating responses from individuals which might not have otherwise become available. I was of course aware that as with the lecturers, I was gaining access to different sorts of data from that available from the individual interviews with senior managers and might as a consequence miss out on responses which individuals were unwilling to share with their peers present. With the students in particular, however, I was conscious also that individual interviews were likely to be a fairly unusual experience for them and as a result could be quite daunting. Whereas, interacting in groups is what they do on a daily basis, socially and in the classroom and might be a more comfortable experience for them.

As with the senior managers and the lecturers I visited the students in their own colleges with interviews taking place within classroom settings. Again, the interviews were deliberately informal and followed on from discussion over lunch or coffee about my research. The latter giving me the opportunity to build up a relationship with them and to reassure them about matters of anonymity and confidentiality. The students had all had the opportunity to look at the phase 1 findings through my validation and reliability checks and this formed the basis for our pre “interview” discussion.



Although, as with the other participant groups I used an audio tape, the “interview” discussion flowed fairly naturally from the pre interview situation and I was at pains to assure individuals that they did not have to contribute and that I would not be asking them the same question individually. As with the lecturers, they were invited to “chip-in” if they felt they had something to say. The focus group interviews had a further advantage in that they allowed me access to group processes and the effects of collaborative working in the classroom on student learning, in the interview process. That is, I was told not only about how they learn from each other in the classroom but the interview process itself replicated how this works in practice in that they encouraged each other to give examples and contribute responses. Cooper and McIntyre (1996) describe a similar advantage in their work with secondary school pupils. I would however expect that such advantages might be more likely someway into a FE course rather than at the beginning of a course.

As with the senior managers and the lecturers I was faced with the same two challenges, indeed they are challenges which all qualitative researchers face. Firstly, how could I encourage the students to put the necessary effort into letting me have access to their thoughts about the specific questions which I had? The fine line between getting the participants to be expansive and seeking specific answers to my research questions. Secondly, could I be sure that I would get access to authentic as opposed to merely plausible responses?

As a consequence, throughout the research process, I was meticulous in my attention to the detail of the interactions with the participants. From the outset, after gaining initial access I worked very hard to maintain access, through the use of both written and face to face communication, the latter often effected through e-mail; I suggested earlier that e-mail may give considerable advantage to researchers, not previously available. This was further effected by spending time before the research started, spending time before the interviews and after, using Rodgerian counselling methods in my interactions, taking care to, at all stages, give reassurances about anonymity and confidentiality, and much more importantly, demonstrating throughout the

research that these reassurances were real. Meetings were arranged to include coffee or lunch and meetings were held with participants in their own “territory”. All of this was intended to give me access to participants authentic views. From the outset my thinking was based on the idea that participants have extensive and complex knowledge of classroom life which allows them to engage in effective teaching and learning. In fact, the criteria for “effective teaching” and the meanings which they attribute to the word “learning” are themselves part of this craft knowledge.

### Definitions of Learning

I started my interview with the students by reminding them of what they and their peers had said in response to my phase 1 research question, which they recognised and found convincing, and then went on to ask them to define learning. For the students learning seemed mainly to be about “knowing”, knowing more, knowing new things, gaining information, knowing enough to teach someone else. As one of them put it

*“basically learning new things and gaining the skills you have, that’s what it is in my opinion anyway, because you are learning every day, so it is just increasing that learning by coming to a college like this or to a University to improve on what you know”.*

Although, there was also some mention of gaining skills, applying knowledge and understanding it, there was little sense of knowledge creation or any sort of challenge to that knowledge. Facts appeared to be just facts which have to be learned and learning was about acquiring more facts than you had before.

### Effective Learning?

As a consequence, I explored their definitions a little more deeply by asking them if there was a sense in which the everyday meaning of learning as knowledge accumulation might be distinguished from “effective learning”. For one student, at least, facts were “facts”.



*"Depends on the subject, some things are facts, some things are ideas. Maths is facts, it's right or not and in Maths you ask and there is no explanation, it's just the way it is and so you have got to forget why and just get on with it".*

For others, effective learning seemed to be about gaining knowledge and developing your knowledge; about gaining skills and know how. As one put it:

*"For instance, in one of our lecturer's classes we learned how to separate bits of an essay, how to structure it. We had never been taught anything like that before. At least when I was at school you didn't get taught that and it makes it so easy to do and he shows you how to do it. "Put that into your introduction, then 50 words on that and 50 words here and 50 words there" and things like that – and we never got that. We were told at school there was a beginning, a middle and an end but they don't teach you how to structure, where we can get taught that here. We can rattle off essays left, right and centre and understand how it is supposed to be set out".*

From this perspective, effective learning seems to be about learning to get through, learning new techniques in order to get through and about usefulness and about techniques and strategies.

#### Classes where you learn more?

This seemed a little superficial and unsatisfactory, so I asked them to talk in a little more detail about the classroom setting and what works for them in helping them to learn. I asked them if there were classes in which they learned more to effectively pass assessments than others, and what made the difference between lessons where they learned a lot and those where they didn't learn much. The students immediately got into territory which was familiar from phase 1. They talked about the cognitive and affective. They talked about "handouts and mock tests". They talked about having enough time to do things and about lecturers "moving on" before they were ready. They also talked about class sizes, as one put it:

*"Not only enjoyment but I think size of class helps, if you've got a smaller class, the lecturer's got more time to give if your stuck at anything to come round and give you individual help, rather than huge amounts of people in the*

*class where you are overlooked if you get stuck at something and they may take time to get to you”.*

This sense of busyness and working to tight deadlines was continued by comments about lecturer demonstrations being too fast to take in. They also talked about some subjects being “boring”:

*“It’s not the lecturers fault, but there is no way they can be made interesting.”*

But they also talked about enjoyment and fun and the need to discuss rather than “just constantly listening”. They talked also about learning from each other:

*“sometimes it is easier to ask someone in the class (my difficult subject is Maths) and you don’t want to ask the teacher because it lets the rest of the class down, but someone else in the class can put it more simply and can grasp what you thought was a really difficult thing, it helps the other person as well”.*

This really very sophisticated understanding of the social processes involved in classroom learning demonstrates also how students feel a responsibility to each other both in terms of helping each other but also in terms of not letting the rest of the class down by interrupting or asking the teacher. This can of course have serious implications for achievement. Breen discusses how:

*“learners jointly conspire with teachers in creating or maintaining a manageable working harmony throughout the particular routines and procedures of the surface text of lessons (2001, page 315)” and*

*“some learners perceptions of the established social relationship in some classrooms may actually encourage them to under achieve (2001, page 316).*

Although not captured on audio tape, students also spoke over lunch of how they often discussed things in the canteen, trying to make sense of what had been said in class and helping each other to understand it.

### Are some Lecturers better than others?

In order to drill a little deeper, I also asked about what lecturers did in helping them to pass assessments and what it was that made some lecturers better than others in the classroom. Many responses were about lecturers giving support and help and about being nice, friendly and approachable. There was discussion also of “letting you know what you have to learn without telling you the answers”. In one college a specific examination preparation period was available to students where past papers were discussed and students were told “this is how you would re-phrase it”. As one student put it “its structured to give you the best possible mark”.

But unusually there was also mention of what doesn't work well. Indeed, one of the themes running through my thesis is the simple idea that by concentrating on the positive we are more likely to get at the authentic views of participants and indeed there were very few examples of any negative comments whatsoever. Here however students did talk about feeling comfortable, with very obvious implications if this was not the case. As one of them put it:

*“Some lecturers aren't very approachable but not many but there are one or two that I wouldn't feel comfortable going to and asking questions to and that really puts me off a subject. If I feel I get stuff that I can't actually say wait a minute, you know, that really puts me off. So, I think friendly, approachable teachers are much easier to talk to and you can approach them at the end of the class if you don't want to approach them during their class. Then I think that is much easier”.*

### Best lessons?

It may be recalled that I asked the lecturers about what they saw as good practice and about best lessons. I returned to this theme with the students. As with the lecturers, the question was initially greeted with laughter and indeed most of the subsequent comments were about enjoyment, fun and atmosphere. As one put it:

*“I couldn't pick out one but you know the word enjoyment, some subjects are not in themselves enjoyable but you know you have to do it to pass. But what*

*I do is just get stuck into the work and at a certain point I feel as if I am making progress and that is when I begin to enjoy it and that makes a good lesson”.*

Enjoyment is not simply about having a laugh but is about satisfaction arising out of beginning to understand the subject. There is also the sense however of having to “do it” in order to pass, what Eccleston (2002) calls “getting through”. The sense of enjoyment is therefore coupled with working hard “we all had a bit of a laugh, a joke, but we also got some serious work done”, as one student said. Getting through at the macro level of course means being able to move on to a job or into higher education and may therefore be key to future personal and economic success. More sinisterly however it might be argued that the neo-liberal policy context with increased surveillance and control, and the pressures to conform to the needs of the market may have worrying consequences for students and for society and the economy. Christie (1997) for example argues that students are effectively socialised in an education machinery rewarding receptivity and the ability to reproduce other people’s experience and ideas. In such circumstances critical and innovative approaches may be at risk and are unlikely to be rewarded by the assessment system or by the job market. This is of course a central contradiction at the heart of the purposes of education with the reconstructed state in that uncritical and unimaginative workers are unlikely to drive economic success.

#### Whose responsibility is it?

One of the strong themes which appears to emerge from all of the participants views so far discussed, those of senior managers, lecturers and students, is the central importance of the lecturer. The lecturer appears to be the key figure in the classroom. I was therefore interested to discover if students would perceive the lecturer as being responsible for ensuring that they “got through” the assessments. It was however clear from the student responses that they felt that ultimately it was their own responsibility. There were some comments about it being shared “both, definitely both” and about lecturers having “a responsibility to make sure you understand what you are going to get in the assessment” about it being a give and

take thing. The majority of student responses were however about their own responsibilities. As one put it:

*"Well look, there is only so much a lecturer can do, then it is down to you. If you don't do the work, then you don't pass the exams, so therefore they can only go so far and then it is really up to you".*

Ecclestone (2002) discusses the extent to which students begin as they move through a course to assume responsibility for their own learning and progress. And there is a sense also in my student responses of movement over time:

*"at first I would have said both but now it's the student its' definitely mine, the lecturer can only do so much, at the end of the day it's mine".*

#### Key Findings: Summary

In summary, students' responses to the phase 1 question, what works well, fell into two sub-categories. Firstly, lecturer led classroom methodology or cognitive factors accounted for 78% of responses and within this sat 3 sub-categories; broad methods facilitating learning, direct preparation for assessment and other methods with broader aims. Secondly, 22% of the student responses identified affective factors within which sat 3 sub-categories; relaxed, friendly, approachable style, encouraging style, and enthusiastic humorous, fun and enjoyable style. In response to the phase 2 questions students discussed classes where they learned more, confirming the importance of cognitive and affective factors, and similar themes emerged from the descriptions of effective lecturer and best lessons, especially in relation to affective factors which were highly valued. Finally students discussed a sense of shared responsibility for learning with lecturers but acknowledge that ultimately the responsibility was their own.

As with the other participant groups, the responses of students and their preference for practical, technocratic approaches is perfectly reasonable, given the policy context, and having completed phase 1 and phase 2 of my research and having continued my validity and reliability checks with participants, I was now in a



position to conduct a comparative analysis of my phase 1 and phase 2 findings. In other words, to bring together the views of the principal participants in order to find common ground, as well as fractures. This comparative analysis follows in chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 7

### **Participants' Perspectives Compared: similarities and differences**

#### Introduction

Drawing on a framework for analysis developed by Morgan and Morris (1999), the purpose of this chapter is to compare the perspectives of the principal participants, the senior managers, lecturers and students within the 4 research colleges. Although, in chapters 4, 5 and 6, in discussing separately the responses of the three sets of participants to my research questions, within phase 1 and phase 2, I sometimes referred to the views of one of the other sets of participants, I did not do so in a comprehensive way which provided an overall summary. Of course, the fieldwork for my research took place at a particular time and in a particular place and was shaped by a particular policy context. I have suggested that the approaches of my participants to learning, teaching and assessment need to be read through the lens of neo-liberal managerialism. Specifically they need to be read in the context of retrenchment and reduced budgets, cost improvement and competitive tendering, renegotiated contracts and reduced job security, appraisal, audit and quality assurance systems, and performance indicators and internal and external comparisons of performance. In such circumstances although it might be anticipated that spaces for agency and authentic relationships might be squeezed it is important to examine the fractures and similarities between groups of participants operating within institutions within the reformed state and that is primarily the purpose of this chapter.

Thus, I do not consider here any data which is a materially different but instead provide a comparative analysis which builds on and confirms the findings which I have already presented. However in so doing I discuss whether the three groups coincide, diverge or simply do not relate to each other in terms of their perspectives.

In chapter 3, I discussed the basis upon which I intended within phase 1 of my research to align the three sets of responses, those of senior managers, lecturers and

students, by putting the same question to each group. In so doing, I wanted to be able to reveal, using a modified phenomenological approach, the factors that participants from all three groups believed to be important, both fractures and shared perspectives. I have however divided my analysis of the phase 1 data into 2 parts. Firstly, because they are so different, I present the responses of senior managers compared to the responses of both students and lecturers. I then compare the responses of lecturers with those of students. Of course in doing this, my aim is to compare the craft knowledge of the principal participants, since in responding to my research question, I was seeking in a very direct and specific way participants' descriptions of the craft knowledge which helps students to learn, to pass assessments.

In phase 2, my purpose was as indicated earlier to explore the implications for effective learning and teaching and assessment of my phase 1 findings, using them as the basis for a more in-depth analysis of participants' views. As we have seen this was effected through a semi-structured interview approach, with individual senior managers, and student and lecturer focus groups, using open questions as the basis for comparison of participants' perspectives. In this chapter comparison of the phase 2 data is presented and linked through analysis and discussion. My overall intention being to make available practice based evidence, which could be used to influence the development of policy and practice within the 4 research colleges, and beyond.

### Phase 1 Data Compared

#### Different Perspectives - Senior Managers Compared with Students and Lecturers

### Main Construct Categories

At first sight, the phase 1 responses of the senior managers are so different to those of the students and lecturers that it might be assumed that they are answering a completely different question. In fact, in returning to the letter which I sent to the senior managers, as described in chapter 4 and reproduced in the research appendix, I realise that although I adopted what at first sight appeared to be a very open approach, I was very precise in what I asked them to do. In the first paragraph of the letter, following an initial introduction, I tell them that “I am interested in getting access to the views of senior managers on what works well in helping students to learn, to pass assessments in the Further Education college classroom”. Indeed, they had all previously had copies of my research proposal, although I did not rely upon them having the time or interest to read it, given the job related pressures under which they operated, even given the ways in which my research might benefit policy and practice within their college. Following some further detail about anonymity, purpose, ethics and confidentiality the letter tells them that I am interested in their views of what they think should be done in order to help students to learn to pass assessments. That is, I say, the practical things which should be done in the classroom during a lesson. As I indicated in chapter 3, I was initially very surprised therefore to see the number of responses from the senior managers which refer to a range of support mechanisms and services which are external to the classroom, and which I describe therefore as operating at a meso, college level. Table 7.1 compares the main construct categories of the senior managers with those of the students and lecturers.

**Table 7.1 Phase 1 Main construct categories : senior managers compared to lecturers and students.**

<b>Participant group</b>	<b>Main construct category</b>	<b>% Response</b>
<b>Senior Managers</b>	Meso college level factors	37
	Micro classroom level factors	61
	(unclassifiable)	2
		<b>100</b>
<b>Lecturers</b>	Lecturer-led classroom methodology	79
	Lecturer creation of positive affect	21
		<b>100</b>
<b>Students</b>	Lecturer-led classroom methodology	78
	Lecturer creation of positive affect	22
		<b>100</b>

Although, clearly operating within them and hopefully benefiting from them, these support services are however not mentioned by lecturers or students in their responses. Lecturers for example do not refer to their induction or the staff training they have received, they do not refer to guidance systems or quality assurance systems, and for their part, students do not refer, for example, to support for learning services, library services or other resources. This is of course not surprising, lecturers and students were asked about learning in the classroom, and it is to this that they responded. What is surprising is that the senior managers, or at least some of them, it will recalled that there was something of a polarisation in their responses ,



talked about external-to-the-classroom factors. Indeed, 37% of senior manager responses were about this, almost 2/5ths.

That is not to deny that these services are important to learning. Cooper and McIntyre (1996) discuss the importance of ensuring that successful learning is seen by teachers, pupils and parents as what a school is about, and go on to discuss the constraints upon teachers imposed by things like poor accommodation, lack of equipment, materials and books, size and composition of classes, timetabling and so on. Similarly, Freiberg (1999) discusses the importance of good support services in helping students to reach their potential. Perhaps it is simply that, as I discussed in chapter 4, senior managers responses reflect the pressures upon them, in that they see things in terms of their remit. More generally, Weick (1995)) discusses how professionals from different disciplines differ in their approach to the same problem, literally they have different “frames of reference”. Having a remit for guidance, or quality assurance, or staff training gives managers a particular focus and set of conceptual and perceptual lenses which, when applied to the question, “What works well in helping students to learn, to pass assessments in the FE classroom?” may encourage them to construct responses which justify their remit, and their continued employment. And of course this justification is legitimate in that these services are important. However, when asked what was important to them, lecturers and students did not mention these services at all, in that their concerns, their targets are different. Of course had I asked lecturers and students a different set of questions I would have got a different set of responses. Clearly had I asked about these services, students and lecturers would have talked about them. And, indeed this is very much the case in a parallel study published by HMIe in Scotland in early 2004, “Student Learning in Scottish FE Colleges” (HMIe, 2004a) and in countless surveys of such services conducted in my own and other Colleges, as part of internal quality assurance systems.

That lecturers and students did not mention these services spontaneously is of course important and is a good example of major structural fracture within further education colleges. Particularly since incorporation there has been a “separation” of senior

managers and lecturing staff. Although, prior to incorporation some senior managers, principals and depute principals, had moved over to different conditions of service, Incorporation led in most colleges to more posts being identified as Senior Management, with new conditions of service and new duties, whether they like it or not, in setting and achieving managerialist targets. This “separation” is most obviously demonstrated within HMIE Review (Inspection) processes, whereby it is widely held within colleges by lecturing staff and by external agencies that the subject review is a review of lecturing staff and that the college review is a review of senior management, of their leadership, although recent changes to the framework (HMIE, 2004b) are claimed to have addressed this issue. Indeed, infamously one of the few colleges principals in Scotland so far to have found themselves in a position whereby they had no alternative but to resign from their post, did so following an HMIE College and Subject Review. During the College Review Inspectors had identified significant weaknesses, which were being addressed, but the Subject Review was much better (I am trying to avoid using words like “unsatisfactory” and “good” because they have particular meanings within the HMIE “lexicon”). Given the perception that responsibilities can be assigned in this way, that is, that senior managers are responsible for wrap around services and curriculum managers and lecturers are responsible for subject areas, it is not surprising that senior managers think that support services are important, they are a major part of their remit and the HMIE Review Framework. They are of course important but clearly lecturers and students do not perceive them to be vital to the day to day classroom business of learning, to pass assessments in the classroom.

I indicated earlier that the senior manager responses and the lecturer and student responses look very different. But of course 61% of the senior manager comments were to do with micro classroom level factors and this looks at first sight to be much more in line with the responses of lecturers and students. It will of course be recalled that I did however have a methodological difficulty in that in classifying the senior manager responses, one of the main construct categories accounted for all of the lecturer and student responses, in that all of the staff and student responses focus on the micro classroom level. When I came to classify the staff and student responses, I

could of course have created just one main construct category “micro classroom factors” and indeed in my discussion of the responses of lecturers and students I indicate how important it is to intertwine the affective and cognitive dimensions of learning and teaching. I discuss this matter in more detail below but for the moment let us turn to an examination of the differences between the views of senior managers and lecturers and students at the sub-category level beyond the support service and staffing categories discussed above. Table 7.2 presents all of the sub categories.

**Table 7.2 Phase 1 Sub Categories: Senior Managers compared to lecturer and students.**

<b>Participant Group</b>	<b>Sub-Categories</b>	<b>% Response</b>
<b>Senior Managers</b>	Effective support Mechanisms.	17
	Effective systems.	13
	Effective lecturing staff.	7
	Lecturer led methodology.	20
	Lecturer led classroom management.	7
	Lecturer creation of positive affect.	13
	Development of meta skills.	15
	Development of specific knowledge and skills.	6
<b>Lecturers and Students</b>	Broad methods facilitating Learning for assessment.	Lecturers 30 Students 31
	Methods of direct preparation For Assessment.	Lecturers 33 Students 30
	Other methods with broader Learning aims.	Lecturers 16 Students 17
	Relaxed, friendly approachable style.	Lecturers 8 Students 10
	Encouraging and supportive style.	Lecturers 13 Students 6
	Enthusiastic, fun, humorous and enjoyable style.	Lecturers 0 Students 6

Starting with the differences, there appear to be no responses from lecturers and students which focus on teacher led classroom management or the development of meta skills. Although within the literature, things like group work are sometimes discussed under the heading of classroom methodology and sometimes under the heading of classroom management, it is clear that the lecturer and student responses I collected are about methods rather than management, in that the focus is on interactional features rather than organisational factors. Although, as I indicated in my discussion of the senior manager responses in chapter 4, such distinctions demonstrate the essential artificiality of such categorisations I used the same criteria to analyse the views of lecturers and students and did not discern in these responses comments which appear to be about organisational features.

The other area of difference is that of development of meta skills and whereas senior managers with their perspective outwith the classroom think that it is important that students are assisted to develop meta skills, although they do not use this term, it is clear that within the busy classroom, lecturers and students focus on more prosaic matters. Although, the lecturer and student “other methods with broader learner aims” category contains responses which are not specifically about learning for assessment, they are not, as indicated earlier, as far as I can tell, about deep approaches to learning (Entwistle, 2000, 2003) learning for understanding (Newton, 2002) about learning to learn, or radical constructivism (Von Glaserfeld, 1995; MacLellan and Sodden, 2003) or ‘thinking to learn’ (Perkins, 1993). They appear to be mainly about the development of specific knowledge and skills.

In terms of the other senior manager micro classroom level factors, “teacher-led methodology”, “teacher creation of positive affect”, “development of specific knowledge and skills” all contain responses which would not be out of place within the lecturer and student sub categories. Indeed, the senior manager “lecturer led methodology”, and “development of specific knowledge and skills” could be reclassified together but even together they account for only 27% of senior manager responses, whereas with lecturers and students the lecturer-led classroom methodology main category accounts for over 75% of responses. Similarly, the



senior manager “teacher creation of positive affect” accounts for 13% compared to the 21% for lecturers and 22% for students. In all, whereas 100% of the lecturer and student responses are contained within similar sub categories, only 39% of senior manager responses are within the same categories.

I am not of course suggesting that senior managers are wrong and lecturers and students are right. Support mechanisms like guidance services are extremely important in terms of proactive and reactive interventions during students’ college careers. Having well qualified staff who have access to programmes of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is extremely important, as is the development of meta skills, well resourced classrooms and well organised lessons. I have no doubt that had I asked students and lecturers about these factors, I would have responses which confirmed their importance, as indeed was the case in the HMIE Study I referred to earlier (HMIE, 2004a). However, when asked what works well in helping students to learn, to pass assessments in the classroom, senior managers gave responses which were overall significantly different to those of lecturers and students. Having said that, it is clear that senior managers do not see the classroom level as unimportant, indeed 61% of responses were about the classroom level, it would appear however that they have a different perception of what is going on in the classroom. I now turn to a comparison of the phase 1 responses of the main classroom participants, lecturers and students.

#### Shared or disparate perspectives? - Lecturer and Student responses compared

##### Main construct categories

As I indicated in Chapter 6, at first sight (see Table 7.1) the main construct categories for students and for lecturers look almost identical. However this is one of the dangers which Silverman (2000) warns of in using numbers with qualitative data. As we shall see, there are interesting disparities in the make up of the sub-constructs which appear to undermine the meaning of the labels which I have given them. In addition, given the relatively small numbers I was working with, the proportions

could have easily been 2% or 3% out in each direction within each of the main constructs, creating an apparently different picture. What is important however is that my previous research within the pilot study and the work of Munn et al (1992), Brown and McIntyre (1993), Cooper and McIntyre (1996), Morgan and Morris (1999) as discussed in chapter 2, all point in the same direction. That is, that the principal participants, teachers and lecturers, students and pupils all value interwoven affective and cognitive factors, and that the cognitive factors are usually seen as more important than the affective ones overall, although Ruddock (2003) claims that pupils are more concerned with how they are treated than how they are taught. This appears to be true of a range of research questions about learning and teaching in the classroom, and what works well. What does appear to differ, however, is the proportion of affective to cognitive related responses. Thus, for example, Morgan and Morris (1990) present data with a 37% pupil response rate for pupil-teacher relationships, while my own pilot work showed a 40% student response rate for what I called the “development of mature relationships with students”. The importance of the affective domain in teacher-learner interaction is further confirmed by research within the Socrates Quali - Teach Project (Harkin, 1998) which used a procedure and protocol analysis to elicit the constructs that students employ when tacitly or informally evaluating their teachers, initially in England and Norway, and subsequently also in Germany, Lithuania and Holland

**Table 7.3 Phase 1 Sub-Categories: Lecturers compared with students.**

Sub-Category	% Response Lecturer	% Response Student
Broad methods facilitating learning for assessment	30	31
Methods of direct preparation for assessment.	33	30
Other methods with broader learning aims.	16	17
Relaxed, friendly, approachable style.	8	10
Encouraging and supportive style.	13	6
Enthusiastic, fun, humorous, enjoyable style.	0	6

Turning now to an analysis of the sub-categories, as table 7.3 suggests although the sub category values are very similar for the “lecturer led classroom methodology” sub categories, the “positive affect” sub categories are more disparate. What I mean by that is that students and lecturers value these latter sub categories to a different extent.

Indeed one of the sub categories “enthusiastic, fun, humorous, enjoyable style” is unilateral. That is it appears to be valued by only one of the groups of the participants, the students. The importance of humour and having some fun is a consistent requirement of participants in the main research antecedents which I have discussed. For example, Munn et al (1992) in discussing the views of pupils on effective discipline suggest that humour is valued alongside control. Pupils expect teachers to police the classroom, allowing learning to take place, but to do so at the same time as making the experience enjoyable and fun through “the lubricant of humour”. Similarly Rudduck (2003) suggests that pupils value teachers who are consistent in their mood, are calm and have a sense of humour, Morgan and Morris (1999) discuss the extent to which teaching should be seen as a performing art and

Rives (1979) argues that, like performing artists, teachers have an audience to engage, a stage or place to perform, something to communicate and modes and styles of performance, in that they can operate both solo or ensemble mode, and have an instrument to play, that is, themselves. What is clear is that the student responses to my phase 1 research question contain comments about the lecturer being enthusiastic, fun, enjoyable and having a sense of humour, although admittedly the percentage value is small, while no lecturer mentions this in any of their responses.

Perhaps in part because of the responses in relation to humour and enjoyment, the other area within the “lecturer creation of positive affect category” which is different enough to require comment is the sub-category “encouraging and supportive style”. Here, the lecturer response value is almost double the response value of that of the students. There is no simple explanation for this except that perhaps lecturers perceive themselves to be more encouraging and supportive than the students perceive them to be. In other words, in asking lecturers what they did to help students to learn to pass assessments, I was told that they encourage and support the students. However, this encouragement and support may not be recognised as such by the students themselves. That may require powers of telepathy which are beyond them or it may be seen as what teachers do in doing their job.

In comparing the other sub categories, the values for “broad methods facilitating learning for assessment”, “method of direct preparation for assessment”, “other methods with broader learning aims”, and “relaxed, friendly, approachable style” are very similar, indeed they are shared perspectives. I was at first surprised by this, I might for example have expected that students would value “methods of direct preparation for assessments” higher than lecturers and that lecturers even given the pressures upon them would value “broad methods facilitating learning for assessments” and “other methods with broader learning aims” higher than students. However, overall the differences are not hugely significant and on a day to day basis such fine distinctions are probably never made by lecturers or students.

As I have described in chapters 4, 5 and 6, following on from my phase 1 research, I was left with a number of unanswered questions and areas for exploration. And as we have seen, I made arrangements to interview the principal participants in order to explore further their perceptions, using the phase 1 data as my starting point. Although, I had as a consequence the opportunity to develop some outline questions, as far as possible, I kept those questions open enough in order to give the participants opportunity to explore their own thinking and to respond in a natural way, while at the same time giving an overall structure to the process. I have described how I approached the interview process and the techniques which I used in order to make the participants feel comfortable and able to respond to my questions. The interviews were as far as possible semi-structured “discussions”. I have described how the phase 1 data gave me my starting point and as a consequence I did not use the same questions for each of the three separate groups of participants or use the same general order of questions, although of course I used the same questions and question order within the sub-groups. That is, each student focus groups were asked the same questions, in the same order, as were each group of lecturers and each individual senior manager. At the same time, it may be recalled that I did however, for all participant groups, cover the same general territory, since this was important in allowing me to make inter-participant group comparisons.

### What is Learning?

In general, most participants across all three groups made it clear that for them learning was about the acquisition of knowledge as such, that at this basic level of definition, learning was simple and unproblematic, it was about the gathering of “facts”. Although, in itself this is not inconsistent with a constructivist approach, there was little sense of mental engagement or exploration of alternative understandings. As one of the students put it:

*“It’s about gaining new information, something that you didn’t know before”*

Learning was thus seen as a “technocratic, rational process” (Bloomer and James, 2001) and a means to an end. That is, learning was about gathering facts and gaining



new information, and the reproduction of facts and information during assessment, leads to certification and to other and better things. As one lecturer put it:

*"It depends on what the student thinks they are here for, what they want to achieve, what they consider to be learning for their course. Some students are here as a stepping-stone to other things. They will be learning to pass the assessment in order to get through to the next part of what they want to do. To achieve their certificate which will let them go onto a job."*

For most of the participants therefore, learning as a concept was not considered problematic. There was neither what Lave and Wenger (1990) might call a concern for the way in which the learning context can have a profound effect on the nature of what is learned, or a concern that institutional settings can have a very different effect on the understandings developed. Although most senior managers and lecturers and students shared this view, it may be recalled that in particular in the phase 1 data senior managers also referred to the development of meta cognitive skills. In the phase 2 interviews however, this theme was taken up by one of the lecturers in their description of the need for students to 'learn to learn' and the need to give students a chance to change. The relationship between learning and change was however not problematic in that the same lecturer goes on to say that:

*"What happens changes students and almost that is more important than what they can learn."*

In the case of senior managers, as I discussed in chapter 4, within the phase 2 data there is discussion although limited of the purposes of formative assessment, which seems promising. However, formative assessment by this definition seems to be seen to be important in helping students move on from their existing knowledge base to a new knowledge base, it does not appear to be concerned with knowledge transformation or creation. As one of the senior managers put it:

*"It is about giving good feedback on formative work, that is, written feedback to improve performance."*



It will be recalled that in order to unpack their definitions of learning a little more deeply I went on in the case of all three groups of participants to ask a supplementary question which explored the extent to which they felt there was a difference between learning and effective learning. In asking this question I was of course interested in how the neo-liberal policy context might be shaping classroom practice. It might for example be anticipated that as education policy in the Scotland has become increasingly focused on its economic function, with the simultaneous marginalisation of broader social aims, that the learning process would be concerned mainly with acquiring and reproducing bits of “knowledge” without questioning their basis. Thus it might be argued that managerialism may have damaging consequences for the education system and for society more generally and the economy. In privileging freedom to manage over other welfare discourses managerialism leaves senior managers, lecturers and students all vulnerable to what Ball refers to as the “terrors of performance and efficiency – performativity” ( Ball 1998 page 190).

### Effective Learning?

Although, as we have seen in chapters 4, 5 and 6 participants across all three groups defined effective learning in similar ways, and ways which were different from their definitions of learning, there is still little sense of learning being constructed, transformed or of knowledge being challenged. There is no sustained development of the critical importance of discussion and discourse. Although discussion and the sharing of ideas is seen as important there is no reference to the need for learners to have to justify, reason or defend a position. Kuhn (1992), Langer and Applebee (1987) and O'Connor and Michael (1996) discuss the importance of discussion and difference in bringing about conceptual change. Further, there is little sense of meaning being differently constructed by different people.

For all three groups of participants effective learning seems to be about understanding and applying and about the development of skills. However, there

was a recognition also that there were different learning styles and that individuals might use different styles on different occasions. As one student put it:

*"There is different ways of learning. No one way works for everyone. So if you have all different ways, sometimes it is good when you have got a group and you can discuss something. Other times its best if you can just sit yourself and figure it for yourself. Sometimes with a subject, sometimes I just have to have quiet. Sometimes I need to discuss something because I might not be sure."*

Classrooms are of course busy places, and although for example Fox (1995) highlights the importance of interactive discussion to student learning within the classroom, Desforges (1995) reminds us also that it is perhaps surprising how much is learned within classrooms given that more generally we often need peace and quiet in order to really feel we have understood something.

Although, senior managers shared a general perspective about what counts as effective learning and teaching with the other participants, they also returned to the theme of the "wrap around services" which they were personally responsible for. As one put it:

*"I would put the emphasis on the learning word. There are lots of things that you can do and I know that in your project one of the things it's doing is to look at evaluation of teaching and learning in the classroom and obviously in my particular role I am now a couple of stages removed from that and because I am not on the curriculum quality side, my approach is not a quality assurance one. My approach is on the other side, its very much about developing resources, trying to signpost creative and interesting ways of dealing with things. I was involved in the Focus on Learning Project, so it is looking at ways that are innovative in approaching teaching and learning."*

Although Senior managers and lecturers also shared a concern about the dangers of "teaching to assessments" that is there was an awareness of a danger that effectiveness might be narrowly defined as "effectively meeting the needs of the assessment" at the same time, effectiveness did not seem to go beyond "linking

learning in one unit and learning in another unit” and getting students to the stage where they can “take what they understand apart”. Senior managers and lecturers revealed an eclectic mix of theoretical approaches, including ideas from behaviorism and from “folk psychology”. As one lecturer put it:

*“Well are we looking at the difference between the conscious and the sub-conscious - unconscious learning, instinctive learning? Well, what is happening in the classroom is hopefully mostly conscious. Maybe if the lecturer can tap into the conscious or unconscious that would be more or less effective? It would be interesting to know if it would be more or less effective.”*

Thus, although senior managers and lecturers recognized the dangers of “teaching to assessments” they were very aware that there was a sense in which this did not seem to be avoidable “there is not much time to do anything else than to teach for exams”. Indeed effectiveness in terms of passing exams might be compromised by a different sort of effectiveness in helping students to be reflective, to transform the knowledge they receive through critical discourse and to arrive at socially constructed meanings; passing assessments might be better effected through repeated practice of techniques than through conscious reflection. Thus, although lecturers might understand “intellectually” the importance of a constructivist approach to learning, the day to day pressures of “getting students through” are likely to militate against this. And while senior managers seemed to retain an idealized view of what might be going on in the classroom, lecturers, and students themselves were much more concerned about passing and moving on.

#### What Works Well – Revisited?

Of course, one of the benefits of meeting the participants face to face was that as well as being able to explore their views with them further, I was also able to seek further validation of the phase 1 data. It may be recalled that I had sent the participants a summary of my findings, together with draft of my analysis prior to the interviews, seeking their views on whether or not they found the data to be authentic and convincing. As a consequence, the participants came to the interview with a good

idea of what their peers had said, if they had found time to read the paperwork I had sent them. It may be recalled also that I took time also prior to the formal part of the interview to discuss with them the findings in order to give the opportunity to re-orientate, to remind them of the purpose of the research and to re-establish our relationship.

I then proceeded to start the interviews by pre-phasing my first question by saying, “having had the opportunity to reflect on what students/lecturers/senior managers said in phase 1 of the research”. In the case of the senior managers, because I wanted to validate their very different views from phase 1, I repeated my phases 1 question and asked them what sort of things they thought helped students learn, to pass assessments in the classroom. As we have seen, if anything I got a stronger iteration of the importance of wrap around support services. As one senior manager put it:

*“It’s a bit more than what we do to get students to pass assessments but then that’s because I guess I’m in the student support area where we are particularly looking at how we help to support learners to take ownership of their learning, to see it as part of a longer process that they should be building skills in College that are going to equip them to get to the next stage and I would hope that the teams (of staff) I work with are encouraging the students to do more than simply look at assessment, to focus on assessment”*

As we have seen this was a very different view from the views of the other principal participants, the lecturers and the students. Of course, senior managers were very much aware of the importance of lecturer and student interaction in the classroom but valorised also the part played by macro and meso level factors, “you need interventions at a big level” and “its not just the classroom, its about the whole organisation” and of course given the policy context this is perfectly understandable. They also, as we have seen had the perception that there needed to be a shift of emphasis from teaching to learning and an acknowledgement of the importance of the development of meta skills, which was missing from the student and lecturer data.

Seeking validation from lecturers and students, I explored the same sort of territory using different questions. In the case of the students I asked them specifically about

their lecturers, whether or not some lecturers were better at helping them to learn, for assessment than others. As we have seen, students confirmed the importance of the affective and cognitive. They wanted lecturers to “get them through” the assessments but to do so in ways which were fun and enjoyable and which recognised the variety of learning styles individuals had by using a wide variety of methods. “Talking at” students was not liked. As one student put it:

*“It depends how the lesson is set out, if it is quite fun or interesting the way that we learn things, then it is easier to learn but if its just talking to you it puts you off”*

In exploring this territory with the lecturers I asked them about the strategies which they used in the classroom on a regular basis which they thought worked well helping students to learn, for assessment. As we have seen, lecturers very clearly recognised the different ways they needed to approach different groups and the different strategies that they needed to employ. “I adapt it to suit the group” and “Sometimes you are blue in the face with younger students, they have got to be older” were typical statements. There was also however recognition of the importance of culture and ethos at a higher level. In discussing their own experience at university one of them said “What they got away with at St Andrews, they would have not have got away with at Glasgow, so it is the environment, not just the individual class”. In general, however, lecturers and students focused on the classroom level confirming the different perceptions of these participants from the perceptions of senior managers. At the same time, lecturers and students recognised the need for variety and flexibility in approach. This of course, echoes the views of teachers and pupils in the previous research which I have discussed. As one lecturer put it in discussing using teaching strategies:

*“Mine has to be totally flexible, be prepared for anything and be prepared to switch within a lesson with different ways, depending what happens and that doesn't mean it is not all well organised but the organisation has to be in such a way that the students don't know that perhaps everything is well organised but that is sometimes more difficult to do than going in with your rigid plan and sticking to it”*



This of course very similar to the framework described by Munn et al (1992), Brown and McIntyre (1993) and Cooper and McIntyre (1996).

What is clear, is that all of the participants had a wealth of craft knowledge. The craft knowledge of lecturers and students was however more “down to earth” and about how they were both engaged in a process of “getting through”. Whereas, senior managers although they might be aware of this “intellectually”, had a more idealised view of what was going on in the classroom. But that is not to say that senior managers did not recognise the importance of developing good teaching strategies and formative approaches to student learning. Both lecturers and senior managers shared an appreciation of the need to employ structure and strategy within lessons. As one lecturer put it:

*“Using analogy, I try to relate everything they do. If I am introducing something new then it has to relate to something they already know otherwise ... that is how I deal with adult learning in my eyes because you have got to relate to make it more effective otherwise you are starting from the beginning again rebuilding the world which you don't need to do”*

On the other hand however, senior managers talked less about the fine detail of the lesson and although they were clearly aware of the need for variety and flexibility, they tended to talk about planning and preparation at a higher “academic” level.

### Best Lessons

In seeking participants views of best lessons, I was of course trying to drill a little more deeply into their perceptions of what works well. With the lecturers, in particular this, following laughter and obvious embarrassment, brought a series of descriptions which appeared less “rational”, less based on pragmatic method. Lecturers talked about things going well for reasons they did not understand, “you’re not teaching you’re guiding” and “it doesn’t always work, it happened to work on that occasion, I was just lucky”. The latter comment being a description of how one of the lecturers had got a “Very Good” grade from a lesson observed during an HMIE



Review. And, there was description also of good lessons emerging from bad ones and good practice following bad. As one lecturer put it:

*"I can almost answer that, I had a class, it was a national certificate class in what was then X college and I started drawing something on the board and where my brain was I don't know because I got half way through this drawing and I turned to the class and said that was a total load of rubbish. I don't know what I'm thinking about. We carried on with the lesson. At the end of the 12 week block a couple of lads from the class came up to me and said 'you remember when you made that total mess at the beginning?' they said 'well that has been a great class because after that we thought we could really trust you because' It wasn't planned but maybe its ridiculous to say it was the most successful the one you made the mess of but maybe you can learn from that"*

The students on the other hand were far more prosaic in their descriptions and of course enjoyment and a positive atmosphere were valued, "I always find it easier to learn in a friendly atmosphere than one that is full of tension". There was mention also of lessons which had stood out because they were unusual, for example, a drama lesson was used as an icebreaker at the beginning of a course.

*"I don't think that they used to do this in the course before but there was a drama lesson introduced this year. Even although we were thinking, God what are we going to do it helped at the beginning because they ended up doing things in front of all these people who we didn't really know and immediately we felt comfortable and I think what followed was a lot more comfortable because we wouldn't be afraid to ask someone in class if you weren't sure of something"*

One of the benefits of doing research on shared experiences, as Brown and McIntyre (1993) describe, is that participants are able to share perceptions. One group of lecturers also had recognised the value of this drama lesson, but the approach was not carried through into the serious business of the course proper, the serious business of "getting students through".

While students talked about fun and enjoyment in relation to best lessons, lecturers talked themselves down and were self-deprecating, through embarrassment or modesty? Although, I did not ask the same direct question of senior managers, I

explored the same sort of territory by asking them about their definitions of effective teaching. Unsurprisingly perhaps, senior managers talked about an eclectic mix of factors including good performance indicators, effective teaching leading to good performance indicators, innovative planning and preparation. As one senior manager put it:

*“Teaching is helping the learner achieve the level of understanding they need in order to progress during that piece of learning, that learning episode and effective teaching can simply be to point the learner in the direction of particular information, helping the learner with perhaps a conceptual barrier about a particular point, helping them bring together the knowledge they already have but just can’t see that they have got it there. Building confidence in the individual or helping the individual believe in themselves, helping the person see that there are different ways in which they can learn and in different circumstances you can apply different learning techniques and different approaches.*

### Roles and Responsibilities

It may be recalled that I was also interested, given the policy context, in how the participants saw their different roles and responsibilities. Although it might be expected that neo-liberal managerialist inspired policy would lead to colluded, colonised practices at the same time there might also be evidence of resistance and individualised agency. Firstly there was of course confirmation that senior managers saw their role of being one of providing strategies and guidance, of providing quality assurance systems and resources and policies within which learning and teaching takes place.

*“My role as a senior manager and particularly in quality is mostly through an annual course review that would be done per course, looking at the whole 9 elements of an HMIe review and thinking about, is the design appropriate? Does that affect what is happening in the classroom? If the level is wrong then the students are not learning then they are switching off, they are leaving? All sorts of reasons, thinking about the resources as well, the staff and the qualifications, are they suitable to deliver the class? Working all the way through. So we review that on an annual basis and obviously what we can do. The course teams have an action plan that they have to work through but we have a core college action plan for the areas that go round every year and people can’t close the loop”*

Senior managers were clear also that although the Funding Council and other funding agencies had a role in setting macro level policy, it was up to individual colleges to get on with the task of providing effective learning, teaching and assessment.

*“Well they have a role, the Funding Council have to have a role because they are providing us with funding. The college is responsible for the allocation of that money obviously but there are other agencies that do impact, it is not just the SFEFC but they do have a key role but it is the colleges responsibility and the senior management and other managers to ensure that staff in their own college are supported to a level that they feel that they should be”*

This clearly contrasts with the very much more specific roles and responsibilities which students and lecturers see themselves as having in relation to learning, teaching and assessment. The students who I talked to saw themselves as having the major responsibility for learning and “getting through”. The students also however recognised the need for partnership with the lecturer:

*“Both, definitely both, because you are not going to pass without the help of your lecturer, so you have got to work hard as well, otherwise it just won’t work”*

These views were echoed by the lecturers. As I reported in chapter 5, lecturers acknowledged their own responsibility “shared, we put the knowledge in” and “it’s a not quite 50-50 partnership, with the balance being on the student”. There was also an acknowledgement of a difference between older and younger students “the older ones think it is theirs” and, in one case differences seemed to arise from class sizes:

*“If I was a tutor on a one to one its 90% my responsibility. The more students you have, the more it is up to the students.”*

For one lecturer there was a sense of being under pressure to pass students which seemed to clash with a sense of there being some sort of moral dimension within assessment which might be character building:

*“Everyone is under pressure to pass students, it comes from a high political level but failure is important for people”*

Here again then the students and lecturers share an understanding, in this case about responsibility for passing assessments, which does not seem to be shared in the same way by senior managers. Although of course lecturers and students at individual level shared with me a range of issues in relation to responsibility, in general they agreed that “at the end of the day it was up to the student”. In contrast, although college performance indicators focus in on individual student and course level performance in addition to macro level PIs which compare college against sector performance, senior managers are held responsible for and in their turn hold course teams responsible for the performance of their students, while at the same time both senior managers and lecturers are expected to support policies of widening access and the promotion of inclusiveness, which are rightly also seen as priorities by the Funding Council and the Scottish Executive.

Having completed this comparative analysis and sought participant views on a draft “write-up”, I turned my attention to thinking about the implications of my findings.

#### How Might My Research Be Used?

The research reported in this thesis tells us much about what was happening in some of the classrooms in four Scottish Further Education Colleges in academic year 2003/04 based on the perspectives of the principal participants, students, lecturers and senior managers. Although, it might be argued that senior managers are not principal players in classroom interaction, this is something which they would deny. It is important to know the things which my research has revealed. Firstly and simply, it is important to know what the principal participants think works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the Further Education classroom. It is important to know whether or not assessment policy is driving a learning and teacher process which is to a large extent limited to getting students through, by encouraging them to accumulate pieces of knowledge and reproduce them for

assessment purposes. It is important to know that there were many good examples of students being stretched and challenged and helped to move on to the next stage. We need to know also, however, whether or not students are being encouraged to examine the theoretical underpinnings of the “facts” they were being asked to learn and with their lecturers and peers, come to shared understandings which challenge the idea of there being a world “out there” which is objective, absolute and exists independently of people, and we need to know in general if constructivism in further education is at best what Von Glaserfeld (1995) calls “trivial constructivism” whereby understanding is built up from received pieces of knowledge, which remain unchallenged. It is important to know these things if we are serious about challenging existing policy and practice.

Of course, I have used the term “to know” with some sense of irony. The perspectives which have been shared with me are themselves socially constructed. I was however left at this stage with a major question. That is, how might my research be used? In my final chapter, I start by providing a summary of my findings, I then revisit the current policy and practice context, describing the interaction of macro, meso and micro political factors, and as a consequence provide, based upon current participants’ perspectives, an agenda for policy, practice and research in relation to learning, teaching and assessment in the classroom, in the Scottish Further Education sector.

## CHAPTER 8

### What Works Well? Conclusions and Implications

#### Introduction

It may be recalled that while it is understood that the relationship between policy and practice is by no means simple and unidimensional, nevertheless the principal aim of this thesis was to explore the impact of the neo-liberal managerialist macro level policy agenda on assessment practices in the Scottish FE College classroom. In particular, the thesis aimed to explore the relationship between the policy agenda of targets and performativity and institutional and classroom practice in the sector. I explored the relationship between learning, teaching and assessment through the methodological device of asking the principal participants – senior managers, lecturers and students – the question “What works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the Further Education College classroom?” Responses to this question enabled the identification of participants’ strategies that assisted students to pass assessments and analysis of these strategies allowed an assessment of the extent to which participants draw on social relationships and craft skills which construct meaning and ‘transform’ knowledge or, in contrast the extent to which they are moved into compliance with a performance of the reproduction of existing knowledge or, the extent to which they coexist and create dissonance for participants.

With this in mind, I attempted to gain access to the authentic craft knowledge of participants, based on their actual experience, not views based on simulations of practice, espoused theory (Argyris and Schon, 1974) or idealised, rationalised narratives. However, although I believe that a key strength of my findings is that they give access to valid and detailed participant accounts, this has been achieved by concentrating on a tiny, in relative terms, number of participants in only four Colleges in Central Scotland during academic year 2003/04. Thus, although I am confident because of all the measures I took to ensure that this was the case, that in most respects these colleges, and the senior managers, lecturers and students were



typical of Scottish Further Education, nevertheless of course, I need to be cautious about making claims for generaliseability, beyond the research colleges. It might be important to replicate my research in other colleges first. In addition, I did not find because of the scale of my research, any significant differences in participants perspectives based on gender, subject area, age or in the case of lecturers, years in post, but that is not to say that a broader study or indeed one which compared say one or two subject areas, or levels of study, would not find relationships which I failed to find.

Having said that, I am nonetheless confident about what I have been able to say for the following reasons. Firstly, the consistency at intra-group level, across the colleges of participants responses. Secondly, my confidence is based on the face validity (Anderson and Herr, 1999; James and Worrall, 2000; Silverman, 2000) of my findings. That is, not only were the responses of the participants consistent, relevant and focused in ways which indicate that they are unlikely to have been fabricated but when I re-presented them to the participants and peer non-participants at each stage, I found an enthusiastic and positive readiness to accept them as authentic. I am confident also because the research methods I employed were designed to remove participant fear and suspicion in that they emphasized the exploration of strengths, not weaknesses, and positives not negatives. This emphasis on the successful gave the participants no reason to be critical of each other or defensive or negative about their own practice or experience. Lastly, my confidence arises from the consistency, in general terms, of my findings with those of Munn et al (1992) Brown and McIntyre (1993) Cooper and McIntyre (1996), Morgan and Morris (1999) and Ruddock (1996:2003), and of course the consistency also with my pilot research findings.

Once I had completed my data analysis and had written a full draft of my findings I contacted my participants again through the colleges contacts, seeking further validation of my interpretation of their perceptions, this time of a full draft version of my thesis. In the e-mail message which accompanied the draft version, I said that if they did not have time to read it in full or in part, I would be grateful for their views

on what appeared to be an important emerging interpretation which was that, “we appear to have conspired to create an assessment system which dominates the learning and teaching process and causes lecturers and students to act principally as ‘hunter gatherers’ seeking out and reproducing bits of knowledge”. I said also that we did not seem to be alone in this in that, further education sectors in many other countries had created similar systems in response to the need to be economically competitive (Brown and Lauder, 1992; Kenway, 1995; Maguire, 2002). Indeed, SQA have, for many years, been exporting their certification and quality framework, for example, to New Zealand, and Botswana and more recently to China. And, as reported in the Scotland on Sunday newspaper (Scotland on Sunday, 10 October, 2004) the Interactive University, located at Herriot Watt University, Edinburgh claims to publish and deliver 4.5 million on-line learning hours based on Scottish qualification per annum, to students around the world. If, however, assessment driven learning and teaching is a response to the need to be economically competitive, then it may be counter productive in its effects, in that systems which develop individuals, even where learning is individualised, who need because of the types of assessment questions set to do little more than reproduce existing facts may be unlikely to be economically competitive, except where low wage, low status, repetitive jobs are valued, in that they are likely to produce workers who lack agency; are uncritical, unimaginative and compliant (Lyotard, 1984; Ozga, 2000; Ecclestone, 2002). In addition, the pass or fail nature of many such assessments systems, with no incentive to do more than pass may encourage students to do no more than the minimum required.

### Policy and Classroom Practice

So how has the macro-policy context shaped approaches to assessment which in their turn shaped the approaches to learning, teaching and assessment on which my field work was based? In this final chapter I want to offer some final thoughts on how neo-liberal managerialism might be read and how it does its work on institutions and individuals. It will be recalled that I have suggested that managerialism is a normative, ideologically driven form of steerage. Steerage is a principle of design

which in order to be effective relies upon a combination of controls effected through legislative change and internal, institutional level mechanisms such as audit, inspection and the use of performance indicators which have the dual function of providing consumers with a basis for selection and stakeholders with a basis for judging effectiveness and efficiency, and of providing a powerful set of managerial imperatives which are internalised and acted upon by individuals. However, although managerialism is effected through formal mechanisms such as inspection, appraisal and assessment, it changes the nature of public work also through the acceptance and promotion of a whole repertoire of assumptions and relationships. As a consequence, at the institutional level, the importance of management is significantly enhanced by the devolution of responsibilities previously held by intermediate bodies like Local Authorities and the installation of forms and processes of surveillance at local level. Such mechanisms although effected thorough audit, appraisal and the publication of performance indicators do their work on individual identity and on workplace relationships. For the individual, managerialism manifests itself through increased responsibility, increased paperwork (as opposed to real work) and increased levels of stress, and the need to manage workload while maintaining a sense of authenticity and integrity. Neo-liberalism works not through secret police but quietly and unobtrusively through market discipline but that of course is not to suggest that individuals feel comfortable in such circumstances or fail to exercise agency. Managerialism can be thus be understood as an antidote to bureaucratic professionalism, the bureau-or public sector professional being associated in the minds of policy makers with failure to operate efficiently and in accordance with consumer needs. Effective and efficient operation of modernised systems must, therefore, ensure that public sector professionals are disciplined, accountable and regulated.

In such circumstances learning, teaching and assessment become forms of production of evidence that enable these monitoring requirements to be satisfied. My fieldwork shows that process in action at the level of students, however, this level is embedded in others, right up to the policy making level itself, that are similarly focused on the creation of targets and the production of evidence that

satisfies the demands of targets. It is within this context that my participants went about their day to day business.

If as a consequence, in general, my participant perceptions are best categorised as being mainly, although not entirely, about descriptions of performativity then that of course is completely understandable, given the managerialist steering of the social policy context. Since Incorporation in 1993 the majority of colleges have struggled financially, many being “named and shamed” by government and its agencies, and as described in chapter 4, this has led to significant changes in contracts of employment for lecturing staff and senior managers, with one of the most casualised workforces in Britain. Ecclestone (2002) suggests that further education is second only to the catering industry in terms of casualisation, with over 50% in England employed on some form of temporary, fractional or part time contract. In Scotland the figure is nearer 25% of FTE posts, although the number of individuals is much higher. At the same time, what Ozga (1998) calls “the economizing process” had led colleges to significantly increase their student numbers and their student base, specifically in response to various political and policy injunctions to widen access and promote lifelong learning and inclusiveness, and ever more demanding PI targets for student retention and attainment have served to focus attention on individual senior manager, lecturer and indeed student performance. In chapter 1, I discussed the assessment workload for individual staff and students in Scottish FE Colleges, and this together with the need for good PIs offers an explanation of why there is in participants perception little evidence of assessment being more than summative, diagnostic or to a limited extent formative but with little mention of formative types of assessment which are integrated with the learning and teaching process and might build on existing knowledge, challenge it and transform it within a community of practice. In fact, the prevailing notion is one of a community of practice which has rather different purposes, a community which because of both policy at the macro level and its translation at the meso and micro levels, and because of the sheer weight of assessment, works together mainly to get students through because this is one of the principal ways in which the performance of senior managers, lecturers and other staff is judged, and as a consequence of which students progress on to a course at a higher



level or into a job. It is worth reminding ourselves of the quotation from Lyotard from chapter 1:

*'the question overt or implied now asked or implied by, the professional student, the state or institutions of higher education is no longer 'is it true?' but 'what use is it?'. In the context of the mercantilisation of knowledge, more often than not this question is equivalent to: 'is it saleable?'. And in the context of power-growth: 'is it efficient?' (1984, page 51)*

The successfulness of staff and students is of course also one of the ways in which colleges and the Sector are judged and with other PIs how they attract more funding, and how individual careers are made or lost. In such circumstances, it is of course understandable that assessment drives approaches to learning and teaching which, although greatly assisted by good affective relationships between lecturers and students are primarily focused on a technocratic gathering and regurgitation of 'facts' and this was recognised by senior managers, lecturers and students, albeit to differing extents. In such circumstances also the emphasis of senior managers on the wrap around services, which support students and college staff, for which they are responsible and on which they are judged is understandable.

Indeed given the background which I have described and despite the availability of a more mediated form of modernization of education in Scotland (Ozga, 2005) it would be surprising if the responses of participants were different. Ball (2000), Broadfoot (2000), Torrance (2000) and Ecclestone (2002) described the sense in which performativity causes and reinforces technical rationality in that as Ecclestone puts it, "the simulcra of targets become a self-fulfilling, rational response whether or not the targets have any meaning." Indeed there is a sense in which macro, meso and micro levels of policy and practice are affected by an all-pervasive performativity, what Power (1997) calls the "pathology of excessive checking". As Hargreaves (2004) puts it "teachers (lecturers) and learners are trapped in the 'three t's' of targets, tests and (league) tables" and this cannot but have effect on individual identity, action and social relationships. And although, more recently HMIE have announced changes to the Review Framework for Scottish FE colleges (HMIE, 2004b) shifting the emphasis on to student achievement rather than attainment, and

simultaneously claiming to be shifting the focus from teaching to learning, this might be seen as a widening of the monitoring net, rather than a turn away from performativity, and thus perfectly consistent with previously policy direction. The foreword to the framework states that:

*“The framework offers a high degree of continuity with the previous version of July 2001, and takes into account the good progress made by colleges in quality assurance, including self-evaluation in the last five years. At the same time, it includes constructive changes in emphasis and coverage, most notably to reflect the significant increase in knowledge within the FE sector in recent years about how students learn, what factors help them to learn more effectively and the increasingly wide range of learning options open to them. Accordingly, the framework offers enhanced scope for individual colleges to review and develop the quality of student learning” (2004b, page 2).*

The claim that there is a ‘significant increase in knowledge about how students learn’ is however not substantiated nor is learning defined. At the same time colleges are ‘invited’ to increase the scope of what can be included in the review.

At the micro level of classroom practice however I would contend, based on my research, that what works well is the translation into everyday language of participants craft knowledge. That is, participants descriptions of what is effective in terms of learning and teaching in helping students to pass assessments, although of course this over simplifies relationships and the complexity of day to day practice. The relationship is multi-dimensional and although within the data there were many examples of good cognitive and affective practice, there were few examples of learning and teaching strategies which might as indicated earlier be described as formative and constructivist. It will be recalled that I had wondered if I might find, despite neo-liberal managerialist practices, that senior managers, lecturers and students might find the space to be more creative and imaginative in their approaches to practice. That I largely did not, is not to say that such practice does not exist but that in the main my participants were moved more towards compliance with performance, and of course that is not to say that there are not times when it is important that senior managers, lecturers and students work together to ensure that students just get through. Newton (2000) and Ecclestone (2002) both make the point



that at times you just need to rote learn things. In fact, of course, as Newton suggest, learning some things helps you to understand other things. This was recognised also by the students I interviewed who said that although they recognised the importance of lecturers making lessons fun and enjoyable, some things whilst necessary were just plain boring, and even the most imaginative of lecturers struggled at that point. In such circumstances senior managers, lecturers and students may become intolerant of risk in assessment. Students commonly ask if the material they are being taught is material about which they are going to be assessed. The implication being that they are unlikely to have the time and motivation to spend on material which is not going to be assessed. That is, they are unlikely to display interested and intrinsic motivation (Ecclestone, 2002). All of this does not of course mean that social relationships were not important and that craft skills were not well developed but that, in the main, they were focused more on performativity than on the social development of meaning and the transformation of knowledge. In other words, although, undoubtedly, social relationships between participants are alive and in many cases are authentic, they are mainly being used to drive a style of learning and teaching which is instrumental in the service of assessment.

As we have seen also, moving from the micro to the macro level, passing assessments is of course a key performance indicator of the success of government policy and thus influences and is influenced by policy change but I am do not of course suggest that policy can simply be understood as the straight forward securing of outcomes, and in any case the link between more students being successful and improved economic performance is at best tenuous, given all the other macro level influences. As Ozga (2000) puts it, policy is a diffuse process rather than a product. Government policy is in turn influenced by and influences public opinion, mediated by the media and influences and is influenced by the Funding Council, HMIe and other intermediate bodies like local authorities and local enterprise companies. Government policy has also a major influence on the policy of the funding agencies and their practice. The government in setting up such agencies has of course been able to deflect responsibility away from itself, putting them in a position so as to be able to blame them for failings in the public sector in general. As suggested earlier,

the recent criticism of SFEFC by the Scottish Parliament's Audit Committee (Scottish Parliament, 2004) for failing to "sort out" college funding problems is one example among many.

The formal relationship between civil servants in the Department of Enterprise and Lifelong Learning within the Scottish Executive and civil servants in the Funding Council is neatly illustrated by the following exchanges between the department head and the then Chief Executive Officer of the Funding Council at a meeting of the Scottish Parliament's Audit Committee in October 2001 (Scottish Parliament, 2001) which examined financial "irregularities" at one Scottish FE College. The exchange demonstrates how steering is effected:

Mr Eddie Frizzell (Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department): *"In a nutshell the department is responsible for setting up the funding council. Ministers make appointments to the Council and the Council is constituted according to minister's decisions. We fund the Council and expect the Council to abide by the financial memorandum that we issue to it.*

*We also issue a management statement that sets out the relationship between the department and Funding Council. In turn, the Funding Council funds the Colleges. The department does not have a direct locus in funding individual colleges; that is a matter for the Council, which meets every so often to make decisions. The relationship between the department and the colleges is therefore at one remove, with the Funding Council in between"*

Professor John Sizer (Scottish Further Education Funding Council): *"Mr Frizzell has explained clearly that our body lies between the Executive and the Institutions. The Funding Council operates within the limits of the financial memorandum from the Scottish Executive, against which it monitors our performance. Similarly I issue a financial memorandum to the Management Board of the Colleges and provide them with guidance, against which I monitor their activities."* (2001, pages 6 and 7).

In addition, the Funding Council "influences" the work of Qualifications Authorities and audit agencies and directs the work of HMIe; the latter through a service level agreement which has moved HMIe from its previous independent role to a more direct, service provider role.

Of course, all of this simplifies a complex and dynamic set of arrangements and through its funding mechanisms the Funding Council has of course a very direct and simple managerialist steering mechanism for ensuring that colleges follow Government Policy. That is the provision of “ring fenced” funding for specific purposes, which of course influences and is influenced by the meso level of college policy and practice. For example, College Board of Management policy and strategy influences and is influenced by Funding Council decisions and macro level strategy, which drives strategic and operational planning decisions within the colleges. Board level strategy is however of course influenced also by micro political factors within a college, such as day to day working relationships between staff and between staff and students both within and outwith the classroom. For example, at a recent job interview for the post of principal in a Scottish Further Education College, I was asked what I thought the role of trade unions was in setting policy in Colleges.

College strategy is reflected in curriculum and curriculum content and of course importantly for this thesis in the way in which assessment practice has developed. Thus, curriculum areas compete against each other for scarce resources in terms of staffing, accommodation and equipment, making collaboration between curriculum managers difficult at best; having good PI's is an important factor in negotiating for additional resources. Although there have been macro level attempts to influence the processes like, for example, awarding more funding for students with special educational needs within colleges, higher level courses and established curriculum hierarchies continue to powerfully determine resource allocation. Even where this is challenged, for example by newer subject areas such as music technology and complementary therapies, this challenge is not because of the inherent value of these subjects but because of the number of students being attracted, that is, their financial value. Of course as we have seen micro and meso level policy in relation to assessment determines in a very direct way approaches in the classroom, whereby although senior managers recognise the importance of wrap around services and of trying to develop meta-level approaches to learning, for lecturers and students assessment workload determines a focus which is very much one of performativity. As Ecclestone (2002) puts it:

*“at both meso level of college organisational structures, and at the micro level of day to day staff rooms, classrooms and visits by awarding body officials and inspectors, interactions seem to rely increasingly on codes of conduct, guidelines, assessment and quality specifications. At one level, these make clear what is required of the diverse groups, and individuals who use them: outcome based assessments in particular codify attributes and learning activities hitherto at the discretion of teachers and awarding bodies to disclose. (2002, page 100).*

I am of course very aware that such representations of the effects of policy might be seen as an example of what Ball (1994) calls “simple realism” whereby policy is presented as rational and unproblematic. That is, based on accounts rationalised after the event. He goes on to warn against a particular trap in using illustrative quotes from data. Nevertheless, I believe that I have dealt reflexively with my interviewees perceptions, by using that their multiple perspectives to both validate and enrich my analysis. My findings, in relation to performativity and a dearth of constructivist and formative approaches to learning in assessment are in line with Ecclestones (2002) findings and analysis of the development of GNVQ in England and are also a logical and consistent response to the lived realities of day to day life in Scottish Further Education Colleges. Indeed, it would be surprising if in the circumstances lecturers and students approaches were less pragmatic. That is not to say that there were not many examples of good practice in learning and teaching but that good practice tends to be focused naturally on getting students through, rather than in helping them develop constructivist and deep approaches to learning within communities of practice in the different subject areas within a college. Getting through a further education course requires attention to detail, stamina, good attendance, good health and hard work. It relies less on imagination and creativity than we might all wish to think.

At the end of chapter 7 I asked the question, how can my Research be used? And indeed in chapter 1, I indicated that as a consequence of my principal aim I had a number of sub-aims or objectives. These were: to explore similarities and fractures between the views of participants; to explore how learning, teaching and assessment is being shaped; to consider the implications for effective practice and the ways in



which practice might be enhanced through continuous professional development, promote classroom observation and the discussion of practice, utilising theory based language; and, to suggest further areas for research. In previous chapters I discussed the views of my participants and how learning and teaching is shaped by an emphasis on assessment and in chapter 7 I looked at the similarities and fractures between their views I have also provided a theory based language for the discussion of practice. In the remainder of this chapter I explore ways in which my findings might be used to enhance policy and practice in the Scottish Further Education sector. I begin by looking at the implications for senior managers before going on to explore the implications for student learning and for lecturers, in terms of continuous professional development for new and experienced lecturers, for innovative practice and for appraisal. I then go on to propose a framework through which lecturers might be encouraged to share their practice before finally suggesting some areas for further research.

#### Implications of and for Macro Level Policy

Although Hutton and Giddens (2003) claim that neo-liberal managerialism is on the wane as a global force being replaced by third-way concerns with social justice, this is ofcourse contested. Indeed of course it is much more likely that neo-liberal and third-way policy coexist and there are similarities as well as dissonance between them (Paterson, 2001).I have suggested that the way that this has been reflected in macro level policy with Scottish FEand in education policy in general is through a new focus on achievement PIs in addition to attainment PIs. In other words, I have suggested that the inclusion of achievement PIs within the scope of HMIE review and other audit mechanisms might be intrepreted as as a widening og the monitoring net and thus perfectly consistant with previous policy. There is both continuity and change. Colleges as a consequence require to improve attainment, attendance, and drop-out rate PIs , and to widen access and inclusion or at least demonstrate that they have ways of measuring improvement and addressing deficiencies across this broad spectrum.

Although I do not expect macro level policy to change significantly in the next few years, I am optimistic that the redesign of Higher National qualifications currently being undertaken by SQA provides the foundation for a more comprehensive review of the whole qualifications system in Scotland. That review requires to involve the Scottish Executive, the public, the media, and employers as well as the Scottish polity in general, HMIe, SQA, Schools, Colleges and Universities. It needs to begin from an intention to design a system which produces creative, imaginative individuals, with well developed critical capacity. And it needs to emerge from an intention to become a more forgiving, generous and authentic nation as well as one which is international competitive and prosperous. In such circumstances it might be possible to construct an assessment system which encourages constructivist approaches to learning and teaching and the development of critical thinking skills – and this could still be turned to instrumental purposes like getting a job, moving on to a higher level course or getting promotion – and we would in the process also be creating a more imaginative, creative and competitive workforce.

#### Implications for senior managers

As we have seen, in some senses senior managers within the Scottish Further Education Sector represent what might be described as a separate community of practice. The senior managers seemed to share more in common with each other than they did with their own lecturing staff and students. But of course that is only true at one level. The colleges themselves formed separate cultures which identified and unified senior managers, lecturing staff and students within their own college. At the same time, although lecturers and students shared common perceptions and worked together within department and class communities of practice, they were also members of other communities within and outwith college life. For example, lecturers share a community of practice with other lecturers teaching the same subject in other colleges, and separate and specialist communities of practice develop around moderation of assessment standards and the development of course unit specifications (Ecclestone, 2002).



In general, however, it might be helpful if senior managers were to do more to develop policies and procedures which would have a direct impact on learning, teaching and the assessment process. During my research, colleges were only beginning to develop Learning Strategies and with the exception of Boyd and Simpson's (2000) work, I could find no examples in the Scottish Schools sector (I got no response to an e-mail to College Senior Managers seeking a copy of their College Learning Strategy), and as we have seen it is clear from the responses of participants that a wide range of theories about learning were in use, informing day to day practice. MacLellan and Soddien (2003) suggest that teachers theories of learning are an "eclectic mixture of social, personal and folk psychology", and Bloomer (1998) and Boys (2000) discuss the limited extent to which vocational qualifications encourage any meaningful transformations of learning or knowledge. Although, the term is much misused, senior managers need to become much more clearly and visibly the "leaders" in relation to learning and teaching and assessment practice within colleges, working closely with lecturing staff and students. They need, as Ozga (2000) suggests to all become potential policy makers, not just the passive recipients of policy. Similarly, Fullan (1993) suggests that change in education is best effected by both top top-down and bottom-up strategies because as he puts it "you can't mandate what matters" or as Senge (1990) says "how to achieve control without controlling". In doing so, at the same time senior managers need to provide evidence to the Funding Council, HMIe and other so-called "stake-holders" that they have robust systems for assessing "distance travelled" and the development of core skills and so-called "soft-skills", complimenting the focus on attainment PI's and if necessary, "underperformance" as a consequence of policies of widening access. They need also to play their part in influencing macro level policy, particularly in relation to the whole assessment system, encouraging the migration to more holistic and constructivist approaches to the assessment of students including the type of questions asked, and finding a balance between the atomisation of the current system and the one chance nature of previous regimes.

However, as the latter is unlikely, at least in the short term, senior managers need to do all that they can to ensure that lecturers and students are clear about what is

expected of them in terms of improving students' meta-cognitive skills and that they are supported in doing this in their day to day classroom activities. That is not easy. The setting of targets for individual lecturers is extremely effective, especially so in the context of changes to contracts of employment and the insecurity and frailty of part-time work. Ecclestone (2002) suggests assessment regimes have become more like what Foucault (1974) calls "regimes of truth", encouraging a set of micro disciplinary practices which reward performativity through the installation of surveillance in the social relations of work, which animate workers to develop managerial concerns and behaviours. Of course, the extent to which workers are comfortable in such circumstances is contested. Casey (1995) discusses the ambivalence which workers feel in managerialist work cultures as a consequence of a perception that the close sociability of team working is artificial and conceals competition and maneuvering and Ozga (2005) suggests that local 'embedded narratives' can act as a resource against global policy change. Of course senior managers too are under pressure to meet and exceed targets (often self-imposed) set within College and Strategic Plans, in order to satisfy Principals, Boards of Management, policy makers, funders and HMIe. It is through such pressures that managerialism does its work on identity, working relationships and practices. And there are pressures also from students, "the customers". Students do want to get through in order to go on to a higher level course or on to employment.

Despite this, senior managers have a responsibility for developing further the wrap around services which were described by my senior manager participants and to shift the focus of classroom activity from teaching to learning to learn. My senior manager participants recognised this and in the remainder of this chapter, I suggest ways in which ways they might lead the so-called "change process", given that major changes at the macro level are unlikely, at least in the short term.

### A Learning Strategy

The development of a College Learning Strategy may be an important starting point for ensuring that all lecturing staff, all students and indeed employers, other external

sponsors, the Funding body, HMIE and other external stake holders are clear about the purposes of coming to a college and the principles and values which underpin them. In developing such a strategy participants have the opportunity to contest the purposes of further education beyond, as Ozga (2000) puts it, a simple means of improving economic productivity, workforce training and as a sorting and selection mechanism for distributing opportunities. Senior managers would have a key role in developing the strategy, with lecturers and students, perhaps using evidence from the types of approaches which I have developed within my research, and monitoring outcomes and initiating further change. A Learning Strategy would provide a definition of learning which suggests also ways in which learning might be promoted in the classroom and outwith. For lecturing staff a central focus would be on the development of formative assessment questions and approaches which are an integral part of the learning and teaching process and which would encourage students to challenge, develop and transform their knowledge; going well beyond summative and diagnostic approaches to assessment. In addition, continuous professional development would support the use of formative assessment skills and the development of teaching and learning approaches based on constructivism and recognition of the variety of ways in which students learn in different circumstances and at different times. Student feedback on what works well might be used to form the basis for discussion with classes, student focus groups and within teaching teams, with continuous professional development being used to build on strengths, within an overall ethos of respect for professional practice and an emphasis on the positive.

Within a frame-work which emphasised the importance of both the cognitive and affective, approaches to learning and teaching might be developed which emphasised the meta-cognitive and formative as well as the specific and strategic. Students would still need to be able to get through. Learning styles diagnostic materials could be used as the starting point for discussion within college induction processes and as part of the types of overall learning support systems which many colleges are now developing. A large number of on-line learning styles questionnaires are now available and I list only a small selection of these: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/keyskills/extra\\_m1\\_p02.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/keyskills/extra_m1_p02.shtml) – BBC Online website,

[http://www.homepages.ed.ac.uk/calarks/arks/Materials/ktl2001/KTL\\_Chapter1.pdf](http://www.homepages.ed.ac.uk/calarks/arks/Materials/ktl2001/KTL_Chapter1.pdf)>  
P37, <http://www.chaminade.org/inspire/learnstl.htm>> - Info about Learning Styles,  
<http://www.adulted.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm%3A%2F%2Fwww.metamath.com%2Fweb%2Fdvlearn.htm>> - College Learning Styles Questionnaire.

Although it would be important for each college to develop its own systems, based on its work with its lecturing staff and students, towards the end of this chapter I provide a proposed structure and framework based on my research. A proposal for the development of a learning strategy within my own college, following on from my research work, is provided in the Appendix (Appendix 33).

#### Implications for Continuous Professional Development, Innovation and Appraisal

One of the principal ways in which senior managers can effect changes in practice is through arrangements for continuous professional development linked to systems of appraisal and systems for introducing innovative approaches to learning and teaching in the classroom. The what works well framework provides a starting point based on what participants, particularly students, say works well. That is, it is “grounded” in what some participants already do, not what they think they ought to do or would do in ideal circumstances. In a very direct way then the methods employed in my research could be used by colleges to understand more about the everyday craft of teaching and much more importantly could be used to develop new approaches to practice.

The material in this section draws on the work of Brown and McIntyre (1993) in adapting their suggestions for improving practice in the school sector for the Scottish Further Education Sector. As I reported in chapter 5, there is no system of pre-service training for further education lecturers in Scotland. Although some lecturers are recruited from the primary and secondary school sectors, predominantly lecturers are drawn from trades backgrounds, indeed this is one of the significant strengths of

the sector. In the Further Education Sector, teacher training is an in-service qualification, and to a very large extent therefore new lecturers are often “left to themselves” to develop approaches to learning and teaching. My research suggests however that there is an untapped reservoir of senior manager, experienced lecturer and student professional craft knowledge available to them. This does not mean however that it is simply a case of giving new lecturers access to simple generalizations about learning and teaching in recipe form. As we have seen, interactions in the classroom are highly complex. The main purpose of giving new lecturers access to craft knowledge would be for them to begin to appreciate the nature of the craft they are attempting to master. Indeed, using a constructivist model, the purpose would be to give new lecturers the opportunity to develop a clear idea of what it is they are attempting to learn, making it available for conscious examination and transformation within their community of practice. As MacLellan and Sodden put it:

*“if teachers are to develop constructivist approaches to learning and teaching, they need to confront their existing (and possibly traditional) conceptions of learning and teaching. Without a conscious and focused examination of what knowledge is and of how people learn, teachers are not going to be predisposed to realise change in their practices.” (2003: page 109).*

In order to give new lecturers access to craft knowledge including their own developing craft knowledge the methods and procedures used in my research may be a good starting point. Given the busy nature of college life any system does, however, require to be simple if it is to be sustainable. In order for it to work it requires to be organised and developed for new lecturers as part of their continuing professional development programme. The mechanisms which I suggest below may be a starting point but it would be important for colleges to develop approaches following discussion of what would work for them. Although much greater weight is now given to school based forms of pre-service training in the primary and secondary sectors, it is not clear that simply giving more access to observation of the methods of experienced teachers is enough.



If the procedures I am suggesting are important for new lecturers, I believe them to be equally important for experienced lecturers also. Indeed, the quotation from MacLellan and Sodden applies to all teachers, and by implication to all lecturers also. In recognizing the role of teachers as both cognitive and affective, Day and Pennington (1993) suggest the need for a multi-dimensional professional development model which meets the needs of teachers at all stages in their career. As I suggested in chapter 5, in-service education for lecturers has been predominantly built on a deficit model of teaching, aimed at overcoming lecturers' "weaknesses". Brown and McIntyre (1993) suggest that the deficit model has several negative consequences; it makes it difficult for teachers to recognise their own skillfulness and believe in themselves, it discourages teachers from considering their teaching analytically and it leads teachers defensively to close their doors and to be reluctant to be observed by colleagues.

In such circumstances, I believe that the procedures I have described and the mechanisms which I suggest below may offer a more productive approach. My participants, particularly lecturers, took great pleasure in discussing their craft with me both in my pre-meetings with them and during the more formal discussion process. They also took great pleasure in hearing about what students had said about them. They were willing to open their classroom doors to their peers, particularly given that the intention was to understand what was going on and what worked well from their perspective, the perspective of the lecturer who was observed. An emphasis on the positive makes it much more likely that lecturers new and experienced will be willing to share their expertise with one another, making their craft knowledge accessible to themselves and to others. This seems important in developing sustainable systems based around self-evaluation in order to improve classroom practice.

Thus, despite the macro, meso and micro level pressures, including as we have seen a focus on weaknesses and areas for improvement within continuing professional development and within HMIe Review, there may indeed be spaces for the development of learning and teaching practice and innovation. Of course, it is not

easy to get lecturers to change their often of a “lifetime” habits. The same is true of teachers in the secondary and primary sectors. Given the pressures on them it is understandable that they develop ways of getting ‘coping’. In order for change to work in the classroom on a day to day basis, new practices need to be better, easier and more efficient from the perspective of the lecturer. Although Holliday (2002) uses the term “tissue rejection” to describe the way in which innovation is often spurned by teachers, Ozga (2000) suggests that the capacity to become an expert in matters of pedagogy is an obligation, not a choice. Understanding what works well in the FE classroom would therefore seem to be an important starting point for change; this linked to observation of peers, self-evaluation, discussion of practice and continuing professional development opportunities based around strengths rather than weaknesses. At the very least, discussion of craft knowledge would allow exploration of why changes might not work and serve, as the first stage in producing changes which would work, based on the perceptions of the principal participants. Senior managers thereby would have a useful way of exploring what would work, so that the resources can be directed efficiently and effectively. The fracture between the views of senior managers and lecturers and students, within my research, suggests that there is a need for detailed dialogue. Although, as Brown and McIntyre suggest:

*“As educators, teachers frequently recognise the merits of proposed innovations: and while politicians and managers of education systems have the power to offer rewards and to impose sanctions to encourage teachers to innovate, it is teachers themselves who ultimately decide whether or not any innovation would be implemented in classrooms”. (1993, page 117).*

I would want to add that students also have a role in making any innovation work, students would at the very least have to be persuaded that any changes would help them to “get through” better. The implementation of innovations and change in learning and teaching therefore needs to be based on practical classroom knowledge of what would work well and needs to be implemented in practical terms, recognising resource and other constraints. Specifically, it would be important to understand how the shift away from predominantly summative and diagnostic assessments could be made, effecting a more concentrated focus on fully formative

assessment questions and approaches that are an integral part of learning and teaching. Suggestions for such integration of formative assessment would, however, have to take account of the sheer weight of continuous and continual assessment. Ecclestone suggests that relying on advice from policy and awarding body documents is inadequate, and attempts to address the matter through continuous professional development require to deal with the likely variation in the extent to which lecturers themselves have experience of constructivist models of learning and teaching. As Ecclestone puts it:

*"In a climate where policy makers criticise college teachers for not achieving for lifelong learning, researchers' suggestions for improving assessment practice could well be dismissed by teachers as a theory too far." (2002, page 179).*

Instead however of basing discussion around generalised views about formative assessment, my research suggests that lecturers are more likely to respond positively to requests to reflect on specific learning or assessment episodes in assessing their perceptions of what works well.

Lastly, I believe that my research might make a contribution to lecturer "appraisal". The fact that I was able to introduce systems for classroom observation across 4 Scottish Colleges at the same time as the main teaching union was confirming its opposition to such practice is significant. The lecturers I worked with were uniformly interested in the processes and willing to give their time and energy to engage in classroom observation and to discuss the outcomes with me and their peers. I would suggest therefore that any system of appraisal of lecturer performance in the classroom needs to be based around observations of classroom practice, based on strengths rather than weaknesses and needs to involve at the very least equal valuing of the lecturers own judgments, understandings and perceptions. My system was based around self-observation validated by an observer. It will be for other colleges to decide whether this is a useful starting point. What is clear, however, is that lecturers need to be helped to articulate their sophisticated craft knowledge and understanding their largely routine and automatic classroom practice. My experience and that of Brown and McIntyre (1993) and Cooper and McIntyre (1996) suggests

that where lecturers are treated with respect, in a reflective atmosphere, they are more than willing to share their accounts of what they think works well.

*"We never sit and talk to each other about how we teach. If we spent a lot more time finding out from each other what we did, we could solve a lot of problems and improve the teaching."* (Teacher: Brown and McIntyre, 1993, 88).

Given, the complexity of the learning and teaching process, however, it would be important to build up a picture of lecturers strengths based on more than just a single HMLe style snapshot and that is why I was interested in developing a system which is based around self-evaluation and is therefore more likely to be sustainable, hopefully avoiding at the same time a sort of self-imposed Foucauldian disciplinary gaze. Foucault (1995) suggests that discipline is not simply imposed from above but that individuals submit themselves to it in order to be able to operate effectively in social and economic life and that discipline works through a series of 'quiet coercions' which shape how people behave and how they see the world. The similarities between what Foucault calls dividing practices and managerialist steering will be obvious. The system would, however, require to be robust enough to build up a reliable and valid picture of strengths based on different kinds of teaching episodes with different kinds of classes. In such circumstances, although, initially lecturers might be more willing to share areas of strength, in the longer term the more confident lecturers might volunteer areas of weakness? If, given what I have said about deficit models, that were thought to be helpful.

#### A Framework for Action

As Ecclestone (2002) contends, in suggesting improvements, there is a risk of them being seen by practitioners as yet another example of political and media derision of teachers, another example of researchers "patronising" FE practioners (see also Ainley and Bailey (1997)). Although Ozga (2000) suggests that education research should not be confined to the useful, I have suggested a number of ways in which my research might be used. I hope that as an FE insider I have not patronised my



colleagues and as a researcher that I have treated my participants with the respect which they deserve. I suggest below one way in which my research methods might be built upon.

As indicated earlier, any system which sought to underpin the changes I have suggested in this chapter would require to be simple if it were to be sustainable, given the pressures, and the busyness of college life, and although perhaps senior managers have a role in introducing them I would suggest that students and lecturers need to be equally involved and “implicated” in their development.

In the Appendix (Appendix 34 and 35) I include two exemplars which colleges, and indeed schools and institutions in the HE sector might consider using as the basis for their own systems, should they choose to develop the types of approaches I have discussed. Firstly, a classroom observation protocol and self-reflection checklist and secondly, a student questionnaire. Both exemplars are based on my research findings, as well as incorporating ‘key prompts’ from HMIe Review framework elements A5 and A7 (HMIe, 2004b). Indeed, as I was redrafting this chapter in December 2004, a seven college consortium, including all 4 research colleges, was formed to begin work on developing a common system and in January 2005, I was invited by one of the ‘research colleges’ to make a presentation of my findings and methodology to staff, as part of a CPD programme, providing some evidence of the potential utility of my research. Although not designed for the purpose the event provided further validation of my data in that it was warmly and genuinely accepted.

The extract from a version of the exemplar classroom observation protocol and self-reflection checklist provided below (Appendix 34 provides the whole document) is intended to encourage self-evaluation within a framework which builds on strengths and at the same time, meets requirements to provide evidence to Boards of Management, the Funding Council, HMIe and other external auditors and ‘stakeholders’ that a rigorous quality assurance system is in place. It is of course not expected that staff engage in active self-reflection after each class or that students complete a questionnaire after each class but that these will have their place in the



learning, teaching and assessment process. Based as they are on the craft knowledge of participants, it is more likely that they will be tacit descriptions, particularly for experienced lecturers. The point of bringing them together is of course to make them available for conscious examination and discussion.

Based on my research findings, the following outline of the elements of a protocol for classroom observation is suggested:

- *All lecturing staff should be observed twice during each academic year;*
- *Lecturing staff are responsible for seeking the agreement of a peer observer;*
- *The member of staff who is observed is responsible for completing the agreed self-observation report, following discussion with the observer;*
- *The report must be agreed by the observer and both the observed and the observer must sign it;*
- *The original must be kept by the person observed;*
- *A copy must be passed to the appropriate curriculum manager, who must keep it available for quality monitoring purposes;*
- *The curriculum manager is responsible for disclosing copies only for quality monitoring purposes, copies must not be passed to any other third party;*
- *Curriculum managers are responsible for ensuring that observation reports inform individual continuous professional development plans, and with colleagues are used to inform whole college staff training;*
- *Curriculum managers are responsible for ensuring that suitably anonymous extracts from self-observation reports are used to inform discussion of learning and teaching methodology during team meetings, and that appropriate changes to learning and teaching approaches are introduced on the basis of the discussion;*
- *Curriculum managers are responsible for the sharing of good practice in learning and teaching across the college, using the appropriate pages within the college intranet;*

The second tool, the self-reflection checklist for classroom observation is intended to be used alongside the protocol. The following extract is designed specifically to promote student learning, the fuller checklist (appendix 34) is intended to satisfy management and audit processes:

*Lecturing staff are invited to consider whether or not they have promoted student learning by:*

- *Developing mature relationships with students, through the creation of an appropriate and supported learning environment which stretches, challenges and rewards students;*
- *Developing fair, helpful and responsive solutions to students learning needs;*
- *Developing approaches which are fun and enjoyable;*
- *Using appropriate classroom management techniques;*
- *Developing independent, meta-level learning skills and promoting learning in a wider sense;*
- *Facilitating, understanding and transformation of knowledge for assessment purposes and linking developing theory to the improvement of practice and practical skills;*
- *Providing formative assessment feedback within the learning and teaching process which challenge students to be critical about material presented to them and to develop a questioning approach to learning;*
- *Raising students expectations of themselves by setting high standards and providing a model for development of creative and craft skills where appropriate;*
- *Reflecting on the class and how student learning might be further promoted and what personal staff training needs may be required;*
- *Adding to a personal log of thoughts and reflections;*
- *Discussing issues with colleagues;*

## An Opening Up

This research builds on work initially developed in the schools sector and confirms some of our understandings of teachers (in this case lecturers) professional craft knowledge of learning and teaching in the classroom. It adds also to our understanding of the craft knowledge of the recipients of teaching, in this case students rather than pupils, and reveals new understanding about the nature of senior managers craft knowledge. It suggests also, as a consequence of the policy context, that assessment is the key to understanding learning and teaching approaches in the FE classroom. This research should however be treated very much as a beginning, rather than as an end. There is much more which could be done both to duplicate and extend this work in other sectors, at a general level, as well as being much more specific, in Silverman's (2000) terms "zooming in", about our understandings of the effects of assessment practices on learning and teaching within a single subject area or by comparing assessment practice within two or more subject areas. This would at the same time broaden our understanding and provide opportunities to generalise, although clearly that would not mean that the findings would go uncontested. In qualitative work, the researcher remains open always to criticisms in relation to generalisability; how many participants, organisations, case studies etc are enough? Although, Foucault (1980) asks why, given that the social world is so "fragmentary, repetitive and discontinuous", we should seek generalisability, in the world of further education it is important to be able to suggest practical approaches which will work, if they are to be accepted by practitioners. My research may also be useful in encouraging small scale action projects within colleges, of the type favoured by the Further Education Region Research Network (FERRN), which provide useful outcomes for practitioners, outcomes which increase their knowledge and improve their practice, albeit that given the complex and subtle nature of the professional craft of teaching, it is certain that both knowledge and practice will remain contested, provisional and open to further development. New and important areas for such research may include the effect of recent HMIe focus on achievement and so called soft indicators on learning, teaching and assessment in further education colleges and the extent to which this is to be understood as consistent with or a turn away from

managerialism, and the effect on learning and teaching of the SQA review of assessment as part of its HN modernisation process.

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Doctorate in Education: EdD

University of Edinburgh

2005

Doctoral Thesis: Partipants' voice: what works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the further education college 'classroom'? Implications for learning, teaching and assessment

## APPENDIX

## Appendix Contents

### Introduction

This appendix provides a schematic outline of the practical steps which I took to gain access to the authentic, reliable, and valid views of participants. It provides in many cases the actual documents which I used to communicate with gatekeepers, participants and other colleagues. The development and re refinement of these documents reflects an iterative process of doing research, writing notes, developing draft chapters, reading and rereading the literature and ongoing formal and informal discussion, and other communication with participants, other colleagues and my supervisor. The apparent linearity, especially of the research plan, masks a course of action which was bi-directional, fragmentary, dialogic and multidimensional, and is reflected in the various changes to the thesis title which are evident in the appendix documents.

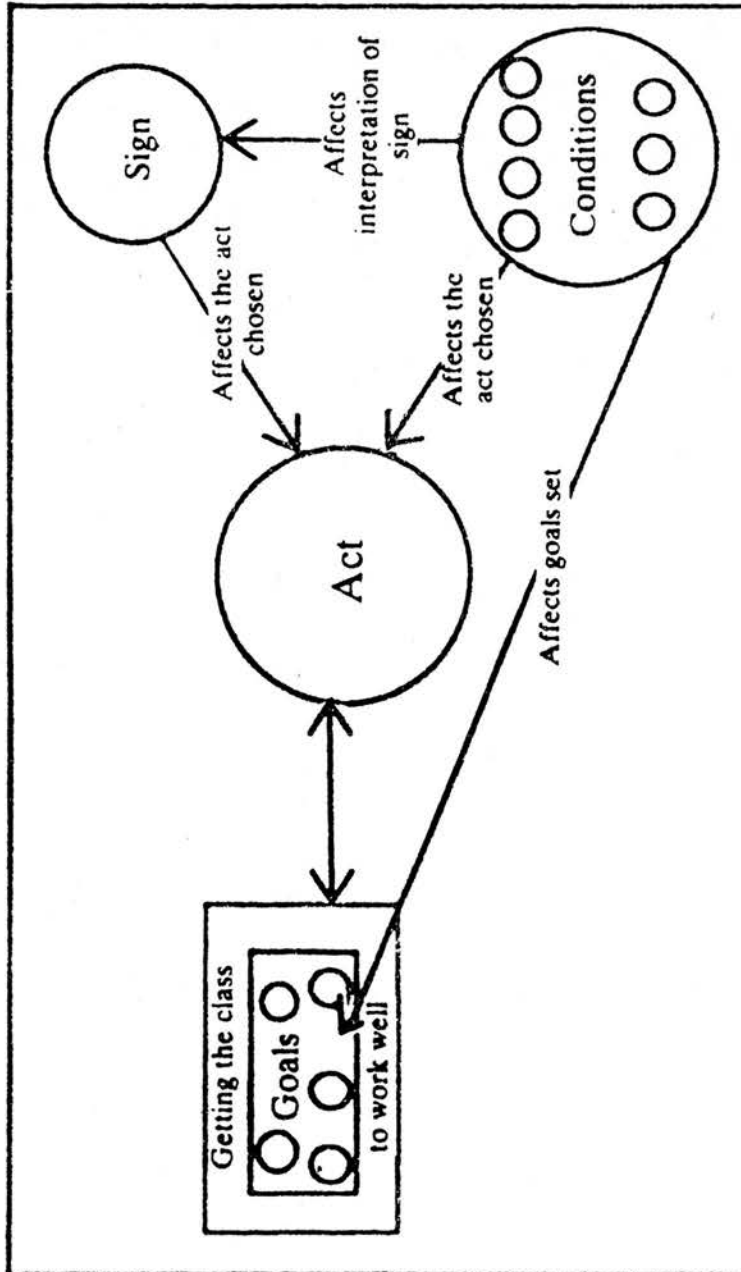
### Appendix:

- 1 Munn et al's (1993) framework for understand how teachers talk about getting a class to work well
- 2 Research Plan
- 3 Gaining access – Letter to Principals and overall research protocol (adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982)
- 4 Gaining access – Letter to Principals: Ethical code and response from one college
- 5 Gaining access – Letter to college contacts
- 6 Gaining access – Letter to senior managers, including specific research protocol
- 7 Gaining access – Letter to participant lecturing staff and extract from thesis proposal
- 8 Gaining access – all staff information sheet/newsletter item: own college
- 9 Gaining access – staff/student information sheet/newsletter item: other colleges
- 10 Maintaining access – Follow-up letter to lecturer participant staff
- 11 Maintaining access – Follow-up emails to senior managers
- 12 Maintaining access – Follow-up emails to college contacts
- 13 Data collection: Participant senior manager proforma
- 14 Data collection – Participant lecturer staff briefing note and data collection proforma
- 15 Data collection: Instructions to staff and student data collection proforma
- 16 Reliability and validity review – phase 1 findings: senior managers



- 17 Reliability and validity review – phase 1 findings: lecturer staff
- 18 Reliability and validity review phase 1 findings: students
- 19 Reliability and validity review – phase 2 questions and findings senior managers
- 20 Reliability and validity review – phase 2 questions and findings: senior managers
- 21 Reliability and validity review – phase 2 questions and findings: lecturer staff
- 22 Reliability and validity review – phase 2 questions and findings: students
- 23 P1 data 2001/02 – 4 Research colleges and sector average: paper presented to Board of Management of one of the colleges
- 24 Colleges P1 data 2001/02: college A
- 25 Colleges P1 data 2001/02: college B
- 26 Colleges P1 data 2001/02: college C
- 27 Colleges P1 data 2001/02: college D
- 28 College profile data 1999-2002: college A
- 29 College profile data 1999-2002: college B
- 30 College profile data 1999-2002: college C
- 31 College profile data 1999-2002: college D
- 32 Lecturer job description
- 33 Exemplar student learning strategy
- 34 Exemplar classroom observation protocol and self-reflection checklist
- 35 Exemplar student questionnaire

FROM: MUNN P, JOHNSTONE, M  
AND CHALMERS, V (1992)  
EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE IN  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND  
CLASSROOMS, PAUL  
CHAPMAN PUBLISHING



How do teachers talk about getting the class to work well?

## Doctorate in Education

### Thesis

**Participants' voice: what works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments, in the further education college 'classroom'? Implications for learning, teaching and assessment.**

### RESEARCH PLAN

#### 2003 May - July

#### Milestones

May - July

- Literature review
- Confirmation of access approval from colleges
- Meetings with named College contacts
- Development of research instruments - Phase 1

Literature Review

- Re-read - Munn et al (1992) - Yes
  - Brown and McIntyre (1993) - Yes
  - Cooper and McIntyre (1996) - Yes
  - Morgan and Morris (1999) - Yes
- Read - teaching and learning culture publications - yes
- Research - other relevant texts but also read "widely" - yes
- Reflection on the theoretical basis and development - yes

Confirmation of access approval from Colleges:

- College A - Yes
- College B - Yes
- College C - Yes
- College D - Yes

Meetings with named College contacts:

- College A - Yes
- College B - Yes
- College C - yes
- College D - Yes

Seek copy of Colleges Learning and Teaching Policy

- College A - Yes
- College B - Yes
- College C - Yes
- College D - Yes

Development of Research Instruments - Phase 1:

- Introductory letter to staff - Yes
- Follow-up letter to staff - Yes
- Staff briefing note - Yes
- Staff report proforma - Yes
- Student response proforma - yes
- Manager response proforma - Yes
- Other staff/student information sheet - yes

Meeting with Supervisor:

- Yes: 9.7.03

## Milestones

- Literature review
  - Meetings with observation teams – 'negotiation' of access at that level
  - 'Training' of teams for observation task
  - 'Posting' of information to other staff and students
  - Meetings with named College contacts
  - Thesis drafting/meetings with supervisor
- Literature Review
- Research and read relevant texts and progressively focus - yes
  - Reflect on theoretical basis and development - yes
- Meeting with observation teams – 'negotiation of access that that level:
- Introductory letter to staff
    - College A – Yes
    - College B – Yes
    - College C – yes
    - College D - yes
  - Introductory meeting
    - College A – Yes
    - College B – Yes
    - College C –
    - College D - yes
  - Follow-up letter to staff
    - College A – Yes
    - College B – Yes
    - College C – yes
    - College D - yes
- Meeting with observation teams:
- Develop staff briefing note - Yes
    - College A – yes
    - College B - yes
    - College C – yes
    - College D - yes
  - Follow-up e-mail/s
    - College A - yes
    - College B - yes
    - College C - yes
    - College D - yes
  - Issue staff and student response proforma
    - College A – yes
    - College B - yes
    - College C –
    - College D - yes
- Meeting with college contacts and information to other staff/students (operational at college level):
- College A – yes
  - College B – yes
  - College C – yes
  - College D - yes
- Meeting with Supervisor:
- Yes: 1.10.03

## 2003/2004 November - January      Milestones

- Literature review
  - **Phase 1** response forms to students
  - **Phase 1** response forms to managers
  - **Phase 1** teaching self observation phase and completion of reporting forms
- Literature Review:
- Research and read relevant texts and progressively focus - yes
  - Reflect on theoretical basis and development - yes
- Phase 1 response forms to managers:
- College A – Yes
  - Cumbernuald – Yes
  - College C – Yes
  - College D – Yes
- Phase 1 Teaching Self Observation Phase and Completion of reporting/response forms:
- Self observation in progress:
    - College A - yes
    - College B - yes
    - College C - yes
    - College D - yes
  - Self observation forms returned:
    - College A - yes
    - College B - yes
    - College C - yes
    - College D - yes
  - Student forms returned:
    - College A - yes
    - College B - yes
    - College C - yes
    - College D - yes
  - Managers forms returned:
    - College A - yes
    - College B - yes
    - College C - yes
    - College D - yes
- Thesis Drafting
- Yes: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
- Meeting with Supervisor
- Yes: 12.01.04



## 2004 February - March

## Milestones

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Literature review</li><li>• Data processing and analysis</li><li>• Write-up of initial findings/development of thesis/meetings with supervisor</li><li>• Presentation of initial findings to students, staff and managers for validations purposes</li></ul>
Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Progressive focusing -</li><li>• Reflect on theoretical basis and developments</li></ul>
Data Processing and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff Data - Yes</li><li>• Student Data - Yes</li><li>• Managers Data - Yes</li></ul>
Presentation of Initial Findings for Validation Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• College A - Yes</li><li>• College B - Yes</li><li>• College C - Yes</li><li>• College D - Yes</li></ul></li><li>• Students<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• College A - Yes</li><li>• College B - Yes</li><li>• College C - Yes</li><li>• College D - Yes</li></ul></li><li>• Managers<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• College A - Yes</li><li>• College B - Yes</li><li>• College C - Yes</li><li>• College D - Yes</li></ul></li></ul>
Development of Interview Questions (including piloting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff - yes</li><li>• Students - yes</li><li>• Managers – yes</li></ul>
Thesis Drafting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yes: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</li></ul>
Meeting with Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yes: 10.03.04</li></ul>

2004

## Milestones

April - June

- Literature Review
- Phase 2 interviews with students, staff and managers - informed by Phase 1 findings
- Presentation of emerging findings to staff, students and managers, for validation purposes
- These drafting/meetings with supervisor

Literature Review

- Progressive focusing
- Reflect on Theoretical basis and development

Phase 2 Interviews

- Staff
  - College A - yes
  - College B - yes
  - College C - yes
  - College D – no
- Students
  - College A - yes
  - College B - yes
  - College C - yes
  - College D – no
- Managers
  - College A - yes
  - College B - yes
  - College C - yes
  - College D - yes

Presentation of Findings for Validation Purposes

- Staff
  - College A - yes
  - College B - yes
  - College C - yes
  - College D – yes
- Students
  - College A - yes
  - College B - yes
  - College C - yes
  - College D – yes
- Managers
  - College A - yes
  - College B - yes
  - College C - yes
  - College D – yes

Thesis Drafting

- Yes: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ,6 rewrite – yes

Meeting with Supervisor

- Yes: 15.04.04

- Literature review
- Further data processing and analysis
- Presentation of chapters to staff, students and managers, for validation purposes
  
- Literature Review
  - Progressive focusing
  - Reflect on Theoretical basis and Development
  
- Further Data Processing and analysis
  - Students
    - College A - Yes
    - College B - Yes
    - College C - Yes
    - College D - Yes
  - Staff
    - College A - Yes
    - College B - Yes
    - College C - Yes
    - College D - Yes
  - Managers
    - College A - Yes
    - College B - Yes
    - College C - Yes
    - College D - Yes
  
- Thesis Drafting
  - Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 - Yes
  
- Meeting with Supervisor
  - Yes 13.9.04
  
- Presentation of chapters to staff, students and managers for validation purposes
  - Students
    - College A - Yes
    - College B - Yes
    - College C - Yes
    - College D - Yes
  - Staff
    - College A - Yes
    - College B - Yes
    - College C - Yes
    - College D - Yes
  - Managers
    - College A - Yes
    - College B - Yes
    - College C - Yes
    - College D - Yes

**2004/2005****Milestones**

October – February

- Literature Review
- Further drafting/meetings with supervisor
- Notification of intention to submit/planning of examination

Literature Review

- Progressive focusing
- Reflect on Theoretical basis and Development

Full Draft Ready

- Yes – Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8

Meetings with Supervisor

- Yes – 23.10.04, 11.01.05, 16.02.05

Notification of Intention to Submit

- Yes – 18.02.05

**2005**

**Milestones**

**MARCH**

- Thesis Submission - Yes



## Appendix 3

236 Lanark Road  
EDINBURGH  
EH14 2LR

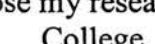
20 February 2003

Thanks. Not sure about this, in the  
present circumstances. I will reflect on  
this, gratefully!  
27/2/03.

Dear 

**UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH: DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION  
DOCTORATE THESIS – WHAT WORKS WELL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO LEARN?**

I refer to our discussion of my Doctorate thesis. I confirm that I would be most grateful if you would give consideration to allowing me to work with members of your staff and your students on a qualitative research project which would have student learning as its principal focus, and which would be effected primarily through classroom observation, and student and staff questionnaires and interviews.

How students learn continues to be a contested area in educational research and I would hope therefore that we can illuminate theory and improve practice – it's a fascinating topic! I am aware however that classroom observation continues to be a sensitive topic but I can confirm that previous research, including my own, which focuses solely on strengths – not deficits – has been highly successful in winning over staff. I enclose my research protocol and an extract from my recent collaborative work at  College.

I am currently working on the detail of my thesis proposal which I need also to have accepted by the University. I would propose to share my drafts with you and seek your comment. The final version would be the 'blueprint' for work in your College. I would hope to begin the research work in September this year, although preliminary work can proceed before that. As you know I am hoping also that the work will be going ahead in 4 colleges (

;) - a good example of collaboration in the sector-based around our primary task, so perhaps I can get SFEFC funding?! At this stage I would be grateful for an 'in-principle' agreement to proceed.

Yours sincerely

  
John Allan

Encs

## RESEARCH PROTOCOL

**Observe protocol:**

Take care to ensure that the relevant persons, committees and authorities have been consulted, informed and that the necessary permission and approval has been obtained.

**Involve participants:**

Encourage others who have a stake in the improvement you envisage to shape the form of the work.

**Negotiate with those affected:**

Not everyone will want to be directly involved; your work should take account of the responsibilities and wishes of others.

**Report progress:**

Keep the work visible and remain open to suggestions so that unforeseen and unseen ramifications can be taken account of; colleagues must have the opportunity to lodge a protest to you.

**Obtain explicit authorisation before you observe:**

For the purposes of recording the activities of professional colleagues or others (the observation of your own students falls outside this imperative provided that your aim is the improvement of teaching and learning).

**Obtain explicit authorisation before you examine files, correspondence or other documentation:**

Take copies only if specific authority to do this is obtained.

**Negotiate descriptions of people's work:**

Always allow those described to challenge your accounts on the grounds of fairness, relevance and accuracy.

**Negotiate accounts of others' points of view (e.g. in accounts of communication):**

Always allow those involved in interviews, meetings and written exchanges to require amendments which enhance fairness, relevance and accuracy.

**Obtain explicit authorisation before using quotations:**

Verbatim transcripts, attributed observations, excerpts of audio and video recordings, judgements, conclusions or recommendations in reports (written or to meetings).

**Negotiate reports for various levels of release:**

Remember that different audiences demand different kinds of reports; what is appropriate for an informal verbal report to a faculty meeting may not be appropriate for a staff meeting, a report to council, a journal article, a newspaper, a newsletter to parents; be conservative if you cannot control distribution.

**Accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality.****Retain the right to report your work:**

Provided that those involved are satisfied with the fairness, accuracy and relevance of accounts which pertain to them; and that the accounts do not unnecessarily expose or embarrass those involved; then accounts should not be subject to veto or be sheltered by prohibitions of confidentiality.

**Make your principles of procedure binding and known:**

All of the people involved in your action research project must agree to the principles before the work begins; others must be aware of their rights in the process.

## Appendix 4

Ask for: Mr John M Allan  
Ext: 228  
Our Ref: JMA/AS/Pers/letColleges  
Your Ref:  
Date: 26 September 2003

Dear John

### Edd Research Thesis: What Works Well? - Ethical Code

The examining Board who approved my thesis proposal noted a number of issues which should be addressed in developing my thesis. Most are to do with being more precise about my framing of questions and the policy context. They were also however concerned that I follow any local ethical procedures.

I enclose a further copy of the procedures which I will be following but would be grateful if you could let me know of any College procedures I should follow also.

Yours sincerely

John M Allan  
Depute Principal

Enc

Thanks. Very relevant, and indeed topical (not that that helps). Two of the policies CIPF does not have and I'm right as what are the  
I would say in  
interviewed people  
Hanna, a very + beautiful



GH/ka/HRM/2369

8<sup>th</sup> October 2003

Dear John

**Re Jma/ As/ Pers/ Let Colleges - 26<sup>th</sup> September 2003**

Further to this letter I am writing to confirm that your work with West Lothian College staff has complied with all college procedures.

I trust that this confirmation is of value please contact me if any further information is required.

Yours sincerely

# Appendix 5

*236 Lanark Road  
EDINBURGH  
EH14 2LR*

tel: 01259 215121

10 June 2003

Dear

**RESEARCH PROJECT: PARTICIPANT'S VOICE -  
'WHAT WORKS WELL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO LEARN - TO PASS  
ASSESSMENTS IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE 'CLASSROOM?':  
IMPLICATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING**

In relation to the research project, I enclose a letter for senior managers. As you will see, there is a SAE for responses, but I should be grateful if you would exercise your usual blend of charm and determination in encouraging your colleagues.

With Best Wishes

John

## Appendix 6

236 Lanark Road  
EDINBURGH  
EH14 2LR

TO SENIOR  
MANAGERS

June 2003

Dear

**RESEARCH PROJECT: PARTICIPANT'S VOICE -  
'WHAT WORKS WELL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO LEARN - TO PASS  
ASSESSMENTS IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE 'CLASSROOM?':  
IMPLICATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING**

As part of this research project which is taking place in your college - and 3 other colleges across central Scotland - I am interested in getting access to the views of senior managers on what works well in helping students to learn - to pass assessments in the further education college 'classroom'. My initial step is to ask you just that question - I enclose a proforma and SAE. Later on, you may wish to reflect further during an interview/discussion with myself. As you know I will be working also with staff and students.

In order to protect all involved, I will be using the following protocol

- **Anonymity.** Colleges will be guaranteed institutional anonymity in the use of information I obtain, as also will the individual students, lecturers and managers interviewed.
- **Purpose.** This research involves collecting information regarding the classroom work of students and lecturers and may throw light on issues connected with the quality of learning and teaching in colleges generally. The sole focus is on strengths. There will be no discussion of weaknesses.
- **Ethics.** This research is not concerned in any way with the appraisal of particular individuals or the assessment of the work of any "department" in a college. The research does not focus on individual people or, indeed, on any individual college *per se*, as the essential purpose of the project is to bring together information which may illuminate issues of quality across colleges generally and beyond.
- **Confidentiality.** No information given in answers to questions during interviews will be attributed; nor will any information deriving from answers to questions be presented in any report in such a way that could identify the source of any statement. The intention is that the information obtained from interviews will be aggregated for analysis and, if developed into any report material, would be presented in positive ways intended to be of help to FE students, lecturers and managers generally.

A/...



A few words of guidance may be helpful as you think about what to write? I am interested in your views of what you think colleges should be doing in order to help students to learn - to pass assessments. That is, the practical things which should be done in the classroom during a lesson. I am "not interested", for the purposes of this research, in 'espoused theory' (Schon 1983) or idealised/unrealistic descriptions.

Thank you for your assistance. I will be in touch to discuss the outcomes as the research proceeds.

Yours sincerely

John M Allan

## Appendix 7

236 Lanark Road  
EDINBURGH  
EH14 2LR

TO STAFF

2 June 2003

Dear Colleagues

**RESEARCH PROJECT: PARTICIPANTS' VOICE –  
'WHAT WORKS WELL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO LEARN - TO PASS  
ASSESSMENTS IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE 'CLASSROOM?':  
IMPLICATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING**

This is an invitation to become involved in a research project which explores the links between learning and teaching in 4 Scottish Further Education Colleges.

How students learn continues to be a contested area in educational research. My interest is in assisting you to develop a sustainable way of enhancing your classroom skills in helping students to pass assessments – I am concerned with matters of practice in unpacking "What works well in helping students to pass assessments in the classroom?" The overall intention however is to inform theory, practice, policy and research.

As a starting point, I would like to help you to talk about what you currently do and will be asking you to use a form of classroom-self-observation – one which allows you to say what went well - as a way of enabling you to describe your 'taken for granted', day-to-day practice. Later on you may wish to reflect further during an interview/discussion with myself. To talk about the ordinary, everyday, familiar things which you do spontaneously, routinely, habitually in the classroom is very difficult. The things which you do automatically, even unconsciously, are the hardest to articulate and in normal circumstances you rarely need to make them explicit. I am interested in your practice, your descriptions of what you do well, which help students to pass assessments, not imported theories or idealised descriptions of what you think you ought to be doing.

In addition, I will be working with students and managers in seeking their views on "What works well?"



In order to protect all involved, I will be using the following protocol:

- **Anonymity.** Colleges will be guaranteed institutional anonymity in the use of information I obtain, as also will the individual students, lecturers and managers interviewed.
- **Purpose.** This research involves collecting information regarding the classroom work of students and lecturers and may throw light on issues connected with the quality of learning and teaching in colleges generally. The sole focus is on strengths. There will be no discussion of weaknesses.
- **Ethics.** This research is not concerned in any way with the appraisal of particular individuals or the assessment of the work of any "department" in a college. The research does not focus on individual people or, indeed, on any individual college *per se*, as the essential purpose of the project is to bring together information which may illuminate issues of quality across colleges generally and beyond.
- **Confidentiality.** No information given in answers to questions during interviews will be attributed; nor will any information deriving from answers to questions be presented in any report in such a way that could identify the source of any statement. The intention is that the information obtained from interviews will be aggregated for analysis and, if developed into any report material, would be presented in positive ways intended to be of help to FE students, lecturers and managers generally.

I am aware that classroom observation may be a sensitive topic but I can confirm that previous research, including my own, which focuses solely on strengths – not deficits – has been highly successful in engaging practitioners and students. I enclose an extract from my research proposal which gives further detail.

If you would like further information at this stage please email, write or phone. I will be arranging to meet with you and your colleagues in due course.

Yours sincerely



**University of Edinburgh**

**Moray House School of Education**

**Doctorate in Education**

## **Thesis Proposal**

**Participants' voice - what works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the further education college 'classroom'? : implications for effective learning and teaching.**

### **Introduction and Thesis Aims**

This thesis is about participants' views – it addresses matters of theory, policy, practice and research, in exploring the often taken for granted relationship between learning and teaching. It seeks to answer the over arching questions – “what works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the further education college 'classroom'? and - what are the implications for effective learning and teaching?

More specifically, its aims are:

- to enhance understanding of learning and teaching through the mobilisation problematisation and development of appropriate theoretical perspectives.
- To inform learning and teaching practice, giving primacy to participants' voice.
- To inform policy and research leading to effective learning and teaching, grounded in practice based evidence.

This is of course a thesis proposal – not the thesis – and I would hope – especially given my topic – that my research will lead to development and change in my conceptualisation of the issues. Nevertheless, Appendix 1 showcases my research objectives and rehearses possible research questions.

### **Rationale for research – professional and academic concerns: key ideas**

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the terms learning and teaching and the relationship between them are often used unproblematically. However, what works well in assisting human learning and what counts as learning remain contested. More specifically, we continue to be unsure about what works well in the 'classroom' in general, and in the more restricted area of learning to pass assessments in the Scottish further education college 'classroom' in particular. This thesis will attempt to illuminate this area of education practice, through an analysis of participants' views – FE students, lecturers, managers – and make recommendation for policy, practice and research. It does not concern itself with

the views of employers and other 'shareholders' or look at learning outwith the classroom or issues of race or disability. It 'contents' itself to paraphrase Silverman (2000) with an ambition to say a lot – relatively speaking – about learning in classrooms in 4 Scottish Further Education colleges, rather than saying a little about learning more generally, while harbouring intentions to speculate concerning generalisability to other FE Colleges, and to other education sectors through review of appropriate research literature.

The topic which originally stimulated this thesis arose from an interest which I have in addressing an area of practice which is much criticised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in Scotland in their published reports, following the formal Review process and also in unpublished feedback. That is, that there is a need for a more systematic (a key HMIE phrase which seems to imply "business like and purposeful") approach to improvement of teaching methodology related to student assessment performance indicators (PI's) in Scottish Further Education colleges.

This initial interest led me to undertake a small scale research project for the Research III course assignment within the Doctorate in Education programme, which had as its principal aims the piloting of a collaborative approach to the collection of FE student and lecturer descriptions of what works well in helping students to learn in the FE 'classroom', and the development of an outline of a checklist and protocol for self-observation by lecturers of their classroom practice.

This thesis starts from where the project ended. In seeking to fulfil its aims and objectives, and answer its research questions, it has as its central concern a need to improve practice in helping FE students to learn to pass assessments by giving primacy to the views of the principal participants – the students themselves and their lecturers. In so doing, it addresses an area of policy and practice which is a day to day concern of my collaborative colleagues and myself.

Paradoxically, this work takes place in the context of policy direction from the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC) which seems to be 'fixated' on college estates strategies as a means of ensuring medium term "financial security" – defined as the ability to sustainably return financial surpluses for investment in buildings and infrastructure for the benefit of students. That is, the Funding Council clearly valorise buildings and infrastructure – mainly ICT – above staff, who are more expensive in the long run and less 'predictable' in the desiderata of the accountants' balance sheet. In so doing, they ignore the social roots of learning and the social contribution to learning - Wenger's (1998) participation in communities of practice argument - while the understanding of how students learn remains under explored and under valued.

My essential value position then is that this thesis will give voice to a view that policy and practice should, through research, be influenced less by ideology,

particularly new managerialism and modernisation, and short term financial drivers and more importantly by the needs of the key participants – FE students and their lecturers. In so doing, I will for example, in the case of lecturers, draw on Lipsky's (1980) concept of "street level bureaucrats", and thus will be suggesting that this represents a turn away from pessimistic assessments of the effects of managerialism and modernisation in the education sector, and that a more optimistic narrative, which is grounded in practice and which celebrates the resilience of FE lecturers is available.





## DOCTORATE THESIS: "WHAT WORKS WELL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO LEARN TO PASS ASSESSMENTS IN THE FE CLASSROOM?" ( a note from John Allan)

Colleagues may recall that last year as part of a pilot study I asked lecturers and students to reflect on and report on what works well in helping students to learn in the FE classroom. During the year 2003/04, I intend to further develop this work by refining the focus in look at "What works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the FE classroom?".

My over research aims are:

- to enhance understanding of learning and teaching through the mobilisation problematisation and development of appropriate theoretical perspectives
- to inform learning and teaching practice, giving primacy to participants' voice
- to inform policy and research leading to effect learning and teaching, grounded in practice based evidence

In addition to my thesis, I plan 6 substantive outputs:

- a toolkit for classroom self observation, incorporating an improving student learning checklist;
- a system and protocol for classroom observation;
- a student learning strategy;
- a contribution to theory in learning and teaching;
- recommendations for FE lecturers initial training, in-service training, appraisal and innovative practice, in relation to student learning;
- recommendations for further research.

I will primarily be working with the Interdisciplinary Studies Curriculum Team (at the same time I will be working with colleagues in \_\_\_\_\_), but if anyone else would like to be involved, please come and talk to me - likewise if you just want to discuss the topic. A copy of my research proposal is available on public folders.

John Allan  
Depute Principal



## **What Works Well in Helping Students to Learn to Pass Assessment in the FE 'Classroom'?:**

As part of a research project which looks at effective learning and teaching strategies at classroom level, I have your Principal's approval to work with a small number of staff and students in seeking to answer the question

"What Works Well in Helping Students to Learn to Pass Assessments in the FE Classroom?"

The research is taking place in If  
you are going to be involved your permission will be sought in advance.

My overall research aims are:

- to enhance understanding of learning and teaching through the mobilisation, problematisation and development of appropriate theoretical perspectives
- to inform learning and teaching practice, giving primacy to participants' voice
- to inform policy and research leading to effective learning and teaching, grounded in practice based evidence.

I am interested only in what works well - not what works badly.

If you would like a copy of my research proposal, or would just like to discuss the research informally with me, please email me at [john.allan@clacks.ac.uk](mailto:john.allan@clacks.ac.uk)

John Allan  
Depute Principal

# FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO STAFF

236 Lanark Road  
EDINBURGH  
EH14 2LR

Telephone:

e-mail:

20 June 2003

## Appendix 10

Dear Colleague

**Participants' voice – what works well in helping students to learn – to pass assessments in the further education college 'classroom'? Implications for effective learning and teaching**

I refer to our meeting of 13 June 2003.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project. I hope that there will be both personal benefit and benefit to the College.

There are some ground rules which I think we must all agree to. These are:

1. The project forms no part of any appraisal system.
2. Lecturer names should not be used in any report documentation.
3. We are reporting lecturers' ideas of what actual practice was effective, not what might be effective in ideal circumstance and not observation of practice. I think however in our discussion of the whole process we will pick up the theme of how accurate the self reflection of what went well was – in the view of those observing. (To lapse in to technical jargon, this may provide a degree of validation, although in qualitative research this is also contested). The observer should therefore make some notes during the lesson.
4. Involvement is voluntary, you may withdraw at any time.
5. You may see what I have written at any time.
6. You must not discuss classroom observation (what was observed) with a third party, either within or outwith the project, other than as discussed under 3 above and as agreed with the person observed. The observer's role is a sophisticated one, similar, to the role of Counsellor, allowing the observer to reflect on the process, without giving direct feedback.

7. The focus is on 'what works well?' throughout – not “what works badly?”
8. Students should be told that the observer is there as part of our Quality Assurance process. In Qualitative Research, the effect of the research is dealt with technically by acknowledging it.

I will arrange to meet you again, early in the new term to agree our next steps.

Finally, thank you once more for your time, energy and enthusiasm.

Yours sincerely

John Allan

TO: SENIOR MANAGER  
PARTICIPATION & RESEARCH

## Appendix 11

From: John Allan  
Sent: 07 July 2003 12:57  
To:

Subject:

Dear Colleague, You may recall that I wrote to you in early June seeking your views in relation to this research project. If you have not already responded - one of the problems of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity - I would be grateful if you could take a few moments to complete the proforma and return it to me here at the college or to my home address (email is fine, if you are happy to use it). I attach a copy of my letter and the proforma. Remember I am interested in practice not theory of practice, although I hope that we can inform theory - policy and practice. In due course I will send you a copy of my accepted research proposal and news of how other aspects of the research are going - I have already met staff teams at

With best wishes, John



100603.doc



SeniorManagerRep  
ortForm.doc



John Allan

**From:** John Allan  
**Sent:** 18 November 2003 11:34  
**To:**  
**Subject:** FW: Thesis

Dear ,As you know one of the ways in which qualitative data is validated is to ask participants.I wonder if you have time to comment on the attached analysis? It would be much appreciated.  
Cheers,John

Dear Colleagues,I attach my analysis of the data sent to me by Senior Managers.I would be grateful for any comment."Does it surprise you" is a question often used in qualitative work.This implies that if it does not, then its probably ok (not in the sense that its just what you expected but in the sense, now that you think about it!)So,does it surprise you? I will let you know what lecturers and students said in due course.  
With best wishes,John

**From:** John Allan  
**Sent:** 07 July 2003 13:07  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Classroom Observation Research

Dear All, Part of the research project is about how policy informs practice and how practice can inform policy. Do you have a Student Learning Policy or a Teaching and Learning Policy? Perhaps they are called something else? If so, could you send me a copy? Cheers, John

John Allan

---

**From:** John Allan  
**Sent:** 05 September 2003 13:52  
**To:**  
**Subject:** RE:

Dear , One group is enough for me sample size wise but I will work with the other group also if its useful for you?! - let's discuss. 12th would be good for me! I need to be here for 2:30 and would need about 45 minutes with your team. So any time up to a 12:45 start would be fine - any time up to and before that!  
Cheers, John

John I talked to our post grad TQFE candidates , and yes they would like to be involved . I'll address this later with the under grad people , who start in Nov .  
Would you like to see the current group on fri 12/9 or 26/9 , late am ?

\*\*\*\*\*  
This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please notify the system manager.

This footnote also confirms that this email message has been swept by MIMESweeper for the presence of computer viruses.

[www.mimesweeper.com](http://www.mimesweeper.com)

\*\*\*\*\*

## John Allan

---

**From:** John Allan  
**Sent:** 05 September 2003 16:11  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Research Project

Dear [redacted] I am really sorry about this! I can see you any time wc15/09/03 - (except Tuesday). Yes, very much my loss. Lunch would be good and on me - the least I can do!  
Have a good weekend, John

**John Allan**

---

**From:** John Allan  
**Sent:** 18 November 2003 11:03  
**To:**  
**Subject:** RE: Research Project

Dear ,How is it going?  
Cheers,John

-----Original Message-----

**From:** John Allan  
**Sent:** 15 October 2003 14:14  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Research Project

Dear ,How are you?Thank you for sending clearance on that ethics matter!Do you have a feel for how its going? I don't have anything back yet, its a bit early but my experience is that colleagues find it difficult to put on paper(leaving aside the logistical issues).Cheers,John



**John Allan**

---

**From:** John Allan  
**Sent:** 18 November 2003 11:04  
**To:**  
**Subject:** RE: Research Project

Dear                   How is it going?  
Cheers,John

-----Original Message-----

**From:** John Allan  
**Sent:** 15 October 2003 14:27  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Research Project

Dear                   You will be pleased to have got the HMEI subject review over with! How is the research going?I don't have anythink back yet - my experience is that colleagues find it difficult to put on paper(leaving aside the logistical issues).Cheers,John

**John Allan**

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**From:** John Allan  
**Sent:** 06 January 2004 12:55  
**To:**  
**Subject:** RE: Research Project

Dear - Happy new year. I need your help to "encourage" staff to return forms staff and student by end January - this is really important so that I can complete the data analysis. If folk have lost my address its 236 Lanark Road, Edinburgh, EH14 2LR - and we agreed the college postal system could be used. Thereafter I want to arrange to interview some staff and students.  
Please, please!  
With best wishes, John

-----Original Message-----

**From:** John Allan  
**Sent:** 18 November 2003 11:04  
**To:**  
**Subject:** RE: Research Project

Dear , How is it going?  
Cheers, John

-----Original Message-----

**From:** John Allan  
**Sent:** 15 October 2003 14:27  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Research Project

Dear You will be pleased to have got the HMEI subject review over with! How is the research going? I don't have anything back yet - my experience is that colleagues find it difficult to put on paper (leaving aside the logistical issues). Cheers, John

# Appendix 13

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
MORAY HOUSE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
DOCTORATE THESIS



**"What Works Well in Helping Students to Learn to - Pass Assessments?": - Senior Manager Report Form**

***What do you think works well in helping students to learn - to pass assessments in the FE 'classroom' (the term 'classroom' covers workshop, salon, laboratory etc as well as its conventional meaning).***

College \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 14

University of Edinburgh

Moray House School of Education

Doctorate in Education

Thesis



## **What Works Well in Helping Students to Learn to Pass Assessment in the FE 'Classroom'? 'Classroom' Observation: Staff Briefing**

This is the staff briefing for a learning and teaching project based around 'classroom' (workshop, salon, kitchen, computer lab etc.) observation. The aim is to create a sustainable process which will assist lecturers through self-reflection (self-reflexiveness) to improve their teaching craft knowledge (self-knowledge) and practice. It is intended that the process will meet HMIE Self Evaluation criteria for quality improvement. Colleagues are asked to work in pairs and observe each other twice before end January 2004.

The basis of the project is 'classroom' observation, augmented by staff and student interviews and responses to an invitation to reflect in writing on what seems to work well in helping students to learn to pass assessments. Instead, however, of following the usual process of observers giving feedback to those observed, the process is reversed (turned on its head), with those observed reflecting on what they think worked well, in writing, using the proforma provided as soon as possible after the lesson has ended. The observer's role is one of mentor and counsellor and involves prompting "Why did you do ...?"; "Was that the same as when you did ...?". The observer is not required to offer their own views as part of the "formal" process although inevitably those observed may want to hear the observers view. For the purpose of this research, we are however, only interested in the observed view of "What Went Well?" The observed's report should however be agreed by observer and observed. Two observations per pair should be attempted. Remember, we are interested only in what works well - not what works badly.

Reports should be returned, in the envelope provided, to John Allan, 236 Lanark Road, Edinburgh, EH14 2LR using the College mail system or by email to [ac.uk](mailto:ac.uk) as soon as possible. All forms must be returned by end January 2004. The reports are intended also to form the basis for systematic discussion of learning and teaching within your College team (department, school, section).

CONFIDENTIAL



**What Works Well in Helping Students to Learn to Pass Assessment in the FE 'Classroom'? Staff Self Evaluation Report Form**

Date of observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Class group: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

**College:** \_\_\_\_\_

Your Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Length of Service \_\_\_\_\_

***In this lesson what did you do which you think worked well in helping students to learn to pass assessments?***

Date \_\_\_\_\_

This form should be completed by the observed as soon as possible after the end of the lesson. It must be agreed by the observer before submission. Reports should be submitted as soon **as possible after they have been agreed**, in the envelope provided, to John Allan 236 Lanark Road, Edinburgh, EH14 2LR or by email to [j.ac.uk](mailto:j.allan@ed.ac.uk)  
All forms must be returned by end January 2004.

# Appendix 15

University of Edinburgh  
Moray House School of Education  
Doctorate in Education  
THESIS



## What Works Well in Helping Students to Learn to pass assessments in the FE 'Classroom'?

### Student Response Forms: Instructions to Staff

This is part of a project aimed at enhancing learning and teaching through lecturer self observation and self reflection. We are interested also in the views of students - what works for them in helping them to learn to pass assessments?

Please give the student response forms to each member of one of your classes allowing around 45 minutes for completion and checking first that they have not already completed a response form. Go over the instructions to students emphasising:

that we are interested in what it is that the lecturer does which works for them (the student) in helping them to learn to pass assessments;

that we are interested in real examples and that it is best to think of each lecturer separately;

that they must not name the lecturer/s;

that we are interested only in what works well - not what works badly;

and that they should answer honestly.

When everyone is finished, ask a member of the class to collect the responses, put them in the envelope provided, seal it, and send it to:

John Allan, 236 Lanark Road, Edinburgh, EH14 2LR - using the College mail system.





**What Works Well in Helping Students to Learn to Pass Assessment in the FE  
'Classroom'?:**

**Student Response Form**

Dear Student

As part of a project aimed at enhancing learning and teaching in the College we are interested in what works well for you in helping you to learn in the classroom (workshop, salon, kitchen, computer lab). More specifically, what does the lecturer you are with do which works well for you in helping you to learn to pass assessments? Think of lecturers who are best at getting you to learn. Do not name them but in the space below (and if necessary on the reverse side) write down separately for each lecturer what they do which helps you to work well in class and learn. We are interested only in what works well - not what works badly. Ask for additional paper if required. You are not required to give your name. You are asked to answer honestly, so that students may learn better in the future. When you are finished, a member of the class will collect your response, put it in an envelope and seal it, so that it remains anonymous

College \_\_\_\_\_

Course \_\_\_\_\_

Your Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Your Age \_\_\_\_\_

What works well in helping me to learn to pass assessments is:

# Appendix 16

University of Edinburgh  
Moray House School of Education  
Doctorate in Education  
Thesis Project



## DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION: THESIS "WHAT WORKS WELL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO LEARN – TO PASS ASSESSMENTS – IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION 'CLASSROOM?': IMPLICATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING.

### THE VIEWS OF SENIOR MANAGERS: RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY REVIEW

PLEASE

Dear Colleague

You may recall that as part of my research, I asked you to tell me what you think works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the further education college classroom. Classroom was defined as including; college workshops, college salons, college computer laboratories and so on, as well as its ordinary meaning.

In qualitative research, one of the ways of checking on the reliability of the data – whether or not others would find the same things (is it typical) – and its validity – is it true – is to ask participants. If they find it untypical, odd – in the sense of strange sounding – and or just plain untrue, then it is likely that there is something wrong.

I should be grateful therefore if you would take a few moments to look at my initial findings which are based on the views of the senior managers who responded to my question, across the 4 colleges. Please thereafter let me have any views you may have. Later on, you may wish to reflect further during an interview/discussion with myself.

From my initial analysis of 54 responses, I created 2 main categories with 8 sub categories – one response was 'unclassifiable'. I use the term "created" because it is a bit misleading to claim that I 'collected the data'. Regardless of the method – all data are in fact produced. Data is not 'out there' awaiting collection like rubbish bags on the pavement! (Perhaps there is a better analogy!)

My two main categories are:

- Macro-College level factors; and
- Micro-classroom level factors

37% of responses fell into the first category and 61% into the second (2% unclassifiable).

My sub-categories for the macro-college level are:

- Effective support mechanisms (guidance, support for learning services, library and resource services) 17%
- Effective staff (staff induction, staff training, motivation) 7%
- Effective support systems (quality assurance, timetables, assessment and moderation) 13%.

My sub categories for the micro level are:

Teacher-led teaching methodology 20%

Teacher-led classroom management 7%

Student development of meta-skills (learning to learn) 15%

Student development of specific skills and knowledge 6%

Teacher creation of positive affect (a good atmosphere) 13%

Does this sound right? I will in due course let you see and comment on Chapter 2 of my thesis where I discuss all of this (I am of course happy to let you read all of my thesis drafts as I produce them).

Thank you for your help.

John Allan

12.10.03

IK/DP-October2003/LettertoColleaguesOctober2003



**DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION: THESIS "WHAT WORKS WELL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO LEARN – TO PASS ASSESSMENTS – IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION 'CLASSROOM?': IMPLICATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING.**

**THE VIEWS OF LECTURING STAFF: RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY REVIEW:  
PHASE 1 DATA**

Dear Colleague

You may recall that as part of my research project I asked you to tell me what you think works well in helping students to learn to pass assessments in the further education college classroom. Classroom was defined as including, college workshop, college salon, college computer laboratory and so on, as well as its ordinary meaning.

In qualitative research, one of the ways of checking on the reliability of the data – whether or not others would find the same things (is it typical?) – and its validity – (is it true?) – is to ask participants. If they find it untypical, odd – in the sense of strange sounding – and just plain untrue, then it is likely that there is something wrong.

I should be grateful therefore if you would take a few moments to look at my initial findings which are based on the views of the lecturing staff who responded to my question, across 4 colleges. Please thereafter let me have any views you may have ( ). Later on, you may wish to reflect further during an interview/discussion with myself.

From my initial analysis of responses, I created 26 categories and thereafter 2 main categories with 5 sub categories. I use the term created because it is misleading to claim that I 'collected the data'. Regardless of the method – all data are in fact produce. Data is not 'out there' awaiting collection like rubbish bags on the pavement! (Perhaps there is a better analogy!).

My initial categories are:

- Provides positive reinforcement
- Provides revision
- Provides practice
- Links to other parts of the curriculum
- Gives individual practice and feedback
- Explains (gives reasons)
- Creates informal/comfortable/relaxed atmosphere
- Encourages/supports students
- Demonstrates
- Provides praise and encouragement
- Communicates/interacts
- Facilitates discussion/including peer discussion
- Links learning to real situations
- Gives room to experiment/develop skills
- Is approachable
- Sets out objectives
- Reinforces through homework/in class questions
- Gives group work
- Gives whole class work
- Summarises previous work

- Use of AVA
- Provides opportunity for note taking
- Encourages thinking skills
- Provides assessment structure plan
- Summarises lesson content
- Use different approaches to facilitate learning of same content

My two main categories are (i.e. these are two main categories derived from the initial 26 categories):

- Lecturer led classroom methods
- Lecturer creation of positive affect
- 79% of responses fall into the first category; 21% into the second, 21% into the second.

My sub-categories for the lecturer led classroom methods category are:

- Direct preparation for assessment 33%
- Broad methods facilitating learning for assessment 30%
- Other methods with broader learning aims 16%

My sub-categories for the lecturer creation of positive affect are:

- Encouraging and supportive style 13%
- Relaxed, friendly and approachable style 8%

Does this sound right? I will in due course let you see and comment on Chapter 4 of my these where I discuss all of this (I am of course happy to let you read all of my thesis drafts as I produce them).

Thank you for your help.

John Allan



## **DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION: THESIS "WHAT WORKS WELL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO LEARN – TO PASS ASSESSMENTS – IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION 'CLASSROOM?': IMPLICATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING.**

### **THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS: RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY REVIEW: PHASE 1 DATA**

Dear Colleague

You may recall that as part of my research project I asked students to tell me what they think works well in helping them to learn to pass assessments in the further education college classroom (what is it that lecturers do?). Classroom was defined as including, college workshop, college salon, college computer laboratory and so on, as well as its ordinary meaning.

In qualitative research, one of the ways of checking on the reliability of the data – whether or not others would find the same things (is it typical?) – and its validity – (is it true?) – is to ask participants. If they find it untypical, odd – in the sense of strange sounding – or just plain untrue, then it is likely that there is something wrong.

I should be grateful therefore if you would take a few moments to look at my initial findings which are based on the views of students who responded to my question, across 4 colleges. Please thereafter let me have any views you may have ( ) and thereafter, 2 main categories with. Later on, you may wish to reflect further during an interview/discussion with myself.

From my initial analysis of responses, I created 44 categories, 5 sub categories. I use the term "created" because it is misleading to claim that I 'collected the data'. Regardless of the method – all data are in fact produce. Data is not 'out there' awaiting collection like rubbish bags on the pavement! (Perhaps there is a better analogy!).

My initial categories are:

- Is approachable/friendly/treats you like an adult
- Provides mock formative assessments
- Provides revision practice/quizzes
- Is helpful/kind
- Explains what is required for assessment clearly
- Spends time with individuals
- Is patient/builds confidence/makes you feel comfortable/relaxed style/easy to get on with
- Spreading assessment over course
- Gives homework
- Self study
- Uses group work/group competitions
- Gives well structured lectures
- Use of IT/Internet/Library/AVA/Board Work
- Use of 'handouts'/worksheets
- Help with research
- Relates learning to real life
- Is fun/enthusiastic/enjoyable
- Gives encouragement
- Is fair
- Combining knowledge from different classes



- Use of practical work
- Colour coding
- Gives support
- Diagrams
- Gives time
- Well organised classes
- Gives variety
- Mind maps
- Gives feedback/remediation/tutorials
- Working at own ?
- Makes you work hard
- Demonstrates correct way/method
- Speaks clearly and concisely
- Sets in context/links to theory
- Involves all
- Using models
- Makes interesting
- Asks challenging questions/stimulates thought
- Gives comprehensive notes
- Makes sure you understand before moving on
- Emphasises important points
- Facilitates discussion
- Able to ask questions
- Peer support facilitated
- Sticks to subject matter

My two main categories are (i.e. these are two main categories are derived from the initial 44 categories):

- Lecturer led classroom methods
- Lecturer creation of positive affect
- 78% of responses fall into the first category
- 22% into the second

My sub-categories for the lecturer led classroom methods category are:

- Broad methods facilitating learning for assessment 31%
- Direct preparation for assessment 30%
- Other methods with broader learning aims 17%

My sub-categories for the lecturer creation of positive affect are:

- Relaxed, friendly and approachable style 10%
- Encouraging and supportive style 6%
- Fun, enthusiastic, enjoyable 6%

Does this sound right? I will in due course let you see and comment on Chapter 5 of my thesis where I discuss all of this (I am of course happy to let you read all of my thesis drafts as I produce them).

Thank you for your help.

John Allan

John Allan

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**From:** John Allan  
**Sent:** 18 November 2003 11:00  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Research Project: Senior Manager Interviews

Dear Colleagues, Many thanks for all your help so far. In phase 2 of my research I am interested in exploring further with you your views using a semi- structured interview approach. I have some outline questions but also want to hear your wider thoughts - on what works well and your role in this. We would start from my analysis of the phase 1 data which you have. I would like to tape our discussion if you agree - and would need about 1/2 an hour (15 minutes for the interview). The tapes would be recycled and you have my word on confidentiality. Could you give me some dates prior to Christmas?  
Cheers, John

# Appendix 20

University of Edinburgh  
Moray House School of Education  
Doctorate in Education  
Thesis Project



## **What Works Well in Helping Students to Learn – to pass assessments in the FE 'Classroom'?**

### **Implications for Effective Learning and Teaching**

#### **PHASE 2: SENIOR MANAGEMENT INTERVIEW**

##### *Questions*

Having had the opportunity to reflect on what senior manager colleagues said in Phase 1 of the research:

- What sorts of things do you think help student learning to pass assessments in the classroom?
- How do you see your role?
- How would you define effective learning?
- How would you define effective teaching?
- How do you see your role in relation to effective learning and teaching?
- How do you see the role of SFEFC and other agencies in relation to effective learning and teaching?

JMA  
08.05.04



**DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION: THESIS – “PARTICIPANT’S VOICE – WHAT WORKS WELL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO LEARN – TO PASS ASSESSMENTS – IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION “CLASSROOM?”: IMPLICATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING**

**THE VIEWS OF SENIOR MANAGERS: RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY REVIEW: PHASE 2 DATA**

Dear Colleague

You may recall, that following on from phase one of my research, where I asked Senior Managers to respond to my research question, I arranged to interview four senior manager colleagues – one from each college – using questions derived from analysis of the phase one data.

I would be grateful if once again you would take a few moments to look at my initial findings, which are based on the responses of the senior managers who I interviewed, to my questions. Their responses form a set of constructs or ways of thinking about what counts as effective learning and teaching and their role in supporting them.

Questions and Responses

Having had the opportunity to reflect on what senior manager colleagues said in phase 1 of the research:

1. Is there anything you would want to add?

- Its much more than what we do in the classroom;
- Its about supporting students;
- Its part of a longer process, building skills for the next stage;
- It is all part of a team effort;
- In terms of assessment in the classroom, we need to help students understand how assessment relates to the curriculum;
- Its about giving good feedback on formative work i.e. written feedback to improve performance;
- You can't separate learning and teaching from all the other things that go on in colleges;
- Its interactive – you need interventions at a big level;
- Its about tiny transactions – getting learners to figure things out for themselves;
- It is not just the classroom, it is about the whole organisation;

- Its about cultures and belonging – other parts need to be in place;
- Its about support mechanisms – facilities and classroom environments;
- The emphasis is on programme tutors as managers of the learning experience – they are key but also their managers, the learners, as well as a whole raft of pull down services;
- The wrap around services need to be there with the learner and lecturer drawing on these services;

## 2. How do you see your role?

- Specifically to provide guidance and support structures as a backup for lecturers;
- Providing resources in terms of material and staffing;
- It is about helping learners develop personal learning styles not just a focus on programmes and the nuts and bolts;
- Its about providing a direct link between strategy and classroom;
- Its about making the big picture work;
- Accommodation, training and so on all add up;
- Its a joint responsibility – to help lecturers to run successful lessons;
- Its about design of courses and self evaluation;
- Its about providing resources and qualifications;
- Its about linking team action plan and college action plans;
- There are many legal aspects now – it has all changed in the last few years;
- Its not about point of contact – its providing the environment from a quality assurance prospective and for self evaluation;
- Its about policy, strategy and plans – the big picture;
- Its about a quality experience for learners.

## 3. How would you define effective learning?

- Its about enjoyment;
- Its about stretching and challenging;
- Its about helping them know what they are doing;
- Its not a magic key – its not a laying on of hands – it is up to them (the students);

- Its about providing models and explaining what terms mean, practical things;
- Its about acquiring knowledge and skills;
- Its about change;
- Its about doing something else, something better;
- It should be enjoyable, actively pleasurable – an experience which satisfies the needs of learners;
- Its about distance travelled;
- PIs are important but so is regular feedback from students;
- Its about discussion in teams about sharing good practice;
- Its more than passing assessments – its about breadth of knowledge, transforming and progression;
- We need to avoid the danger of teaching to assessments – need to challenge students;
- Its about linking learning in one unit and learning in another unit – not just closing the box;
- Staff training and course team meetings are important;
- Having understanding is the key;
- Its about ensuring that students can take what they understand and apply it and it is easily recalled;
- So they can take what they understand apart;
- Its about shifting the emphasis to learning and away from teaching.

#### 4. How would you define effective teaching?

- Many of the same sorts of things;
- Good performance indicators
- Its about helping learners, especially young learners;
- Its about innovative methods – not just about passing assessments;
- You can have good services, good programmes and well qualified staff but not good PIs and so soft indicators important also;
- Its about teachers managing the learning – guiding discussion
- A satisfactory lesson – its like a script



- Its about planning and being familiar with your subject
- Its about reinforcing what they have learned from previous weeks
- Preparing using various methods of delivery;
- Its about variety – using technology, stimulating the learner
- Its about helping learners achieve understanding
- Its about pointing learners to support – over coming conceptual barriers
- Its about building confidence
- Its about organising knowledge and using different techniques

5. How do you see your role in relation to effective learning and teaching?

- Its about developing resources
- Developing innovative ways and encourage teaching and learning
- Its about strategies – guidance on learning styles
- Its working with learners, not just to learn subject matter
- Quality assurance role
- Its providing high quality resources
- Effective teaching equals effective learning – in theory you can leave assessment out of it
- Meetings with heads of department; its about management and board meetings
- Its about providing training for class “reps” so they can provide feedback

6. Do you see the role of SFEFC and other agencies in relation to effective learning and teaching?

- SFEFC set the agenda - policy on access and inclusion;
- They set targets – directing funding, for example TQFE targets
- Its College business
- SFEFC may have lost sight of its role
- SFEFC have role through funding;
- Its College responsibility to use funds to support staff and students

- Other agencies have a role also – especially support agencies;
- SFEFC provide financial support – a wrap around of student support and child care funds which help students, allow them to take opportunities to move to where they want to be
- SFEFC provide a quality assurance framework through HMle, that signals its intention through the identification of good practice which supports all learners

Does this sound right? I will in due course let you see and comment on Chapter 3 of my thesis where I discuss all of this (I am of course happy to let you read all of my drafts as I produce them!).

Thank you for your help.

John Allan  
26.05.04



## What Works Well in Helping Students to Learn – to pass assessments in the FE 'Classroom'?

### Implications for Effective Learning and Teaching

#### PHASE 2: LECTURER INTERVIEW

##### *Questions*

Having had the opportunity to reflect on what lecturer colleagues said in Phase 1 of the research:

What is learning?

- How do you define learning – what do you think learning is?
- Is that the same as effective learning?

What is teaching?

- Do you have an identifiable style of teaching and if so, what is it? Is your style different with different classes?
- Tell me in detail about the teaching methods and classroom strategies which you use on a regular basis, which work well in helping students to learn for assessment.
- Think of a really good lesson that you gave recently when you thought that it had gone really well. What were the factors which contributed to it being a good one – what worked well in helping students to learn for assessment?
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure that you learn to pass assessments – yours or the students – what do you think the roles of lecturer and student are?

JMA

08.05.04

IK/JA-Doctorate/WhatWorksWellLecturerInterviewMay2004

JMA 08.05.04



**DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION: THESIS – “PARTICIPANT’S VOICE – WHAT WORKS WELL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO LEARN – TO PASS ASSESSMENTS – IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION “CLASSROOM?”: IMPLICATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING**

**THE VIEWS OF LECTURERS: RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY REVIEW:  
PHASE 2 DATA**

Dear Colleague

You may recall, that following on from phase one of my research, where I asked lecturers to respond to my research question, I arranged to interview a sample of lecturers using questions derived from analysis of the phase one data.

I would be grateful if once again you would take a few moments to look at my initial findings, which are based on the responses of the lecturers who I interviewed, to my questions. Their responses form a set of constructs or ways of thinking about what counts as effective learning and teaching and their role in supporting them.

Questions and Responses

Having had the opportunity to reflect on what lecturers said in phase 1 of the research:

1. How do you define learning – what do you think learning is?

- Taking on board knowledge so it can be applied;
- You won't remember it all but at least you know its there so you can go back to it and look it up;
- Its so wide, it's a big question;
- I don't buy this governments definition of lifelong learning, we should be learning all the time;
- Its absorbing information;
- If we're not learning all the time, what are we doing?
- As many different definitions as learning – depends what they want to achieve;
- Learning to pass assessments in order to get through to the next stage;
- Its about achieving a certificate to get a job;
- Some want to retain knowledge others just want to move on;

- Its retention of knowledge, its giving someone knowledge and then disseminating it for their own use;
- Its gaining new information which makes you act in a different way from what you did before;
- Two types – the stuff they need for their course but also all the things outwith which they think they need;
- What happens changes students and almost that's more important than what they can learn;
- The type of students we are bringing in now need different types of support – so there will be more of this almost socialisation role. They need a lot of guidance and support to understand this learning component but so do all Access to Higher Education students;
- They need to learn to learn – its about giving them a chance to change;

## 2. Is that the same as effective learning?

- Is it the difference between conscious learning and unconscious learning? Its mainly conscious in the classroom;
- You find something of interest and its easier to learn, like doing a "bookies line" or playing darts, so if its relevant they will learn so its our fault if we don't make it relevant;
- If the lecturer were able to tap in to the unconscious it might be more effective – it would be interesting to know if it were more effective;
- I teach a model first then information, so it's a system which leads you back to reinforcement;
- Effective is only effective if you can use what you learn later;
- It has to be retained – at least long enough to pass the assessment;
- Because of the amount of assessment, people are being trained in exams – its like rote learning;
- Effective learning is learning for a job, its got to be interesting;
- There is not time to do anything else but to teach exams;
- Its easier in practical subjects, you can see what they have done;
- You wonder if all you have done is taught them to pass the assessment. Have you made the difference but if that's what you need to do – get them through, then you have made a difference;
- We don't have mechanisms for evaluation other effects – i.e. being able to read a newspaper and other effects on life – confidence, going out with confidence;

- Food learning as opposed to bad learning, like sticking your hand in a fire but I suppose that might be good learning as well;

3. Do you have any identifiable style of teaching and if so, what is it? Is your style different with different classes?

- I try to relate everything they do;
- If I am introducing something new, it has to relate to what they already know;
- If you use the knowledge they already have its more effective – otherwise you are starting from the beginning again;
- You have to build it up, you can't go straight to the hard stuff;
- Its not just standing at the front – its more than that, that's part of it;
- You need to be flexible, to teach in line with learning styles. You change your style to suit the student;
- When you teach, its not just what you teach its how you put it over – you've got to be relaxed;
- Be prepared to admit mistakes – make mistakes on purpose, get the class to trust you;
- Matching to individual learning styles, building up relationships, informality and getting students to set goals;
- Totally flexible – be prepared for anything, switching in a lesson, that doesn't mean its not well organised but the students don't know;
- Can't go in with a rigid plan;
- Informality, turn on a six pence, in creative subjects if you've got 12 students, you've got potentially 12 solutions (you can see the progression and change in Art and Design);
- I go in knowing what I want to achieve but with 20 in a class they might all get to it in 20 ways. I seldom class teach, I tell them all what I want to get to;
- A lesson plan is organisational – so it looks like you have in control but that's all you need because you have to change direction if things don't work out;

4. Tell me in detail about the teaching methods and classroom strategies which you use on a regular basis, which work well in helping students to learn for assessment.

- Discussion;
- Using the more able to help the less able without making it too obvious and you don't want to hold the more able back;
- Following tangents but I let the class go. You're not teaching your guiding. Doesn't always work; happened to work on that occasion (just lucky);



- Guiding them can be difficult to do, you are no longer in full control but with some classes it won't work;
  - But with 'less confident' students it doesn't always work. Blue in the face with younger students – they've got to be older;
  - Demonstrations, show them the next steps but not all of it;
  - (own experience at University and College). What they got away with at St Andrews they would not of got away with at Glasgow – so its the environment, not just in the individual class;
  - I adapt it to suit the group, different styles to different groups;
5. Think of a really good lesson that you gave recently when you thought that it had gone really well. What were the factors which contributed to it being a good one – what worked well in helping students to learn for assessment?
- I can almost answer that, by admitting my mistakes and getting their trust – not planned;
  - A sense of humour comes into it – it brings students out;
  - Having time to plan it;
  - Getting them to ask – asking them if they don't ask but using silence also;
  - I think you'll all have to go to another team now (laughter);
  - Breaking a demonstration up into smaller pieces – bite size, like how you eat the elephant;
  - My best came from my worst where I needed to change my style because it hadn't worked well this previous week;
  - European studies – we talked about what people would eat in France, we made it and ate it. They all thought it was wonderful. There was discussion, practical aspects and enjoyment;
  - Demonstrating software to teachers. We planned, because it was Primary School Teachers, we were determined to be organised. Very interactive, they all had a computer and could see things happening and a practical use for it. It was all hands on;
  - Using short questions and answers using software – getting students to write and feedback. Developing independence;
  - My bad lessons are where you have to cover for someone;
  - Helping students to structure sentences – enjoyable for us as well;
6. Whose responsibility is it to ensure that you learn to pass assessments – yours or the students – what do you think the roles of lecturer and student are?
- It's a not quite 50/50 partnership with the balance being on the student;

- Shared, we put this knowledge in;
- You can lead the horse to water;
- A lot of people think its ours – its an attitude, its shared;
- If I was a tutor on a 1 to 1 its 90% my responsibility. The more students you have the more its up to the students;
- Difference between older and younger students – the older ones think its theirs;
- You can individually teach each student – you can give them knowledge and confidence but unless they are willing;
- Identifying the learning area – skills, knowledge, theory and analysis evaluation;
- Its willingness but they've got to have the ability;
- Both – it has to be built on good relationship but they are not taking responsibility – they have got to;
- Everyone is under pressure to pass students – it comes from a high political level but failure is important for people;
- You've got to give them guidance and support – I think its called formative assessment – to pass the assessment;
- We have a responsibility to say if they are not ready – all sorts of facets.

Does this sound right? I will in due course let you see and comment on Chapter 4 of my thesis where I discuss all of this (I am of course happy to let you read all of my drafts as I produce them!).

Thank you for your help.

John Allan  
07.06.04



## What Works Well in Helping Students to Learn – to pass assessments in the FE 'Classroom'?

### Implications for Effective Learning and Teaching

#### PHASE 2: STUDENT INTERVIEW

##### *Questions*

Having had the opportunity to reflect on what students said in Phase 1 of the research:

What is learning?

- How do you define learning – what do you think learning is?
- Is that the same as effective learning?

What is teaching?

- Are there some classes in which you feel that you learn more to pass assessments than others? What makes the difference between lessons where you learn a lot and those where you don't learn much – what works well for you?
- Are some of your lecturers better at helping you to learn for assessment than others? What makes some lecturers better than others in the classroom?
- Think of one of the best lessons which you have had at College. What made it a good lesson for you – what worked well in helping you to learn for assessment?
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure that you learn to pass assessments – yours or your lecturers – what do you think the roles of lecturing and student are?

JMA  
08.05.04



**DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION: THESIS – “PARTICIPANT’S VOICE – WHAT WORKS WELL IN HELPING STUDENTS TO LEARN – TO PASS ASSESSMENTS – IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION “CLASSROOM?”: IMPLICATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING**

**THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS: RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY REVIEW:  
PHASE 2 DATA**

Dear Colleague

You may recall, that following on from phase one of my research, where I asked students to respond to my research question, I arranged to interview a sample of students using questions derived from analysis of the phase one data.

I would be grateful if once again you would take a few moments to look at my initial findings, which are based on the responses of the students who I interviewed, to my questions. Their responses form a set of constructs or ways of thinking about what counts as effective learning and teaching and their role in supporting them.

Questions and Responses

Having had the opportunity to reflect on what students said in phase 1 of the research:

1. How do you define learning – what do you think learning is?
  - Upgrading the skills you have;
  - Learning new things;
  - Acquiring knowledge;
  - You are learning every day, so it's a case of coming to a college to improve what you know;
  - A process of knowing nothing about a subject to knowing enough about a subject to be able to teach someone else with confidence;
  - We've learned enough so I can show my daughter how things work;
  - When you first get told something and you don't understand it, you need to discuss it and do a couple of examples and suddenly you understand it;
  - Its someone passing the knowledge of a subject from one person to another. Teaching them something they know and bring out the best qualities in that subject;
  - Its like driving a car, learning computing is the same;
  - Gaining information and understanding it;

- Knowing something you didn't know before;
- Knowing something and being able to apply it.

2. Is that the same as effective learning?

- What do you mean by effective learning?
- Learning is just presenting information but effective learning is presenting information in a way that somebody will understand, pick it up and develop it from there;
- In communication we learned how to separate bits of an essay – how to structure it, it makes it so easy. We got told at school there is a beginning, middle and end but you don't get told how to structure it. We can do essays now;
- That form of learning that shows you how it works, it didn't seem so bad after that, didn't seem so daunting!
- Different ways of learning, no one way worked for everyone so if you have different ways it can help;
- Sometimes it is do good when you have a group and you can discuss and other times its best to work by yourself;
- Sometimes I just need to have quiet to take something in, sometimes I need to discuss;
- If it's a few weeks its good to go back and have a refresher and try to see how much comes back to you without having to read it all again;
- ~~Depends on the subject, some things are facts and some things are ideas. Maths is facts - its right~~ <sup>OR NOT;</sup> ~~and English is hard and in maths you ask and there is no explanation, its just the way it is and so you've just got to forget why and just get on with it.~~

3. Are there some classes in which you feel that you ~~more~~ more to pass assessments than others? What makes the difference between lessons where you learn a lot and those where you don't learn much – what works well for you?

- Enjoyment of it;
- But not only that, size of classes helps if you've got a smaller class, the lecturer has more time to come round and help you than if there are numbers and you're overlooked if you are stuck;
- If you've got not enough time to do things especially in two hour classes. When you are trying things and the lecturers moved on to something else;
- Some subjects are boring, its not the lecturers fault, there is no way they can be made interesting;
- Handouts and mock tests – they let you know where you are going wrong. The lecturer says and that helps you;

- Depends how lesson is set out, if its fun its easier to learn things but if its someone talking to you it puts you off, you just switch off;
- You need a break to discuss and then go back to it rather than just constantly listening;
- Yes, its marked out by the difference between learning and effective learning;
- I find if someone is talking at you it doesn't go in, I find you've got to do things for it to sink in;
- Its like if someone shows you something, they do it that fast you think what did they do – you have to do it for yourself;
- I think when we get to discuss things as a class, that helps because someone else's ideas help you to understand;
- Different people have different ways of putting things across, the teacher may have said it but because someone else puts it a different way, you say you understand it now. Sometimes you see one side and someone else sees the other and you put both together;
- Sometimes it is easier to ask someone else in the class (my difficult subject is maths) you don't want to ask the teacher because it lets the rest of the class down but someone else in the class can put it more simply and can grasp what you thought was really a really difficult thing. It helps the other person as well.

4. Are some of your lecturers better at helping you to learn for assessment than others? What makes some lecturers better than others in the classroom?

- Letting you know what you have to learn without telling you the answers;
- We have an exam prep period and all we do is past papers she tells how – “this is how” you would rephrase it, its structured to give you the best possible mark;
- At University there was ‘xxx’ all help;
- Some lecturers give you all the support and help you need and generally that's what it comes down to – getting all the support and help you need;
- Some lecturers are not very approachable so I would not be comfortable asking and they put me off a subject – nice, friendly and approachable. You can just go up and ask at the end of the class;
- There are a few lecturers who are a bit patronising and you would not feel comfortable – they give the impression that you should already know this, so you have to find it out for yourself.

5. Think of one of the best lessons you have had at College. What made it a good lesson for you – what worked well in helping you to learn for assessment?

- I could not pick out one but enjoyment;
- Some subjects are not enjoyable but you know you have to do it so you just stick in;



- You just do it. You've just got to do it. At a certain point I feel I am getting somewhere;
  - It's a job to lecturers, it's a day to day job – we're doing a course to improve our prospects;
  - If you get on well with people that's half the battle – if it's a very boring subject and a very boring teacher then it's a bad experience but with a boring subject you get on with the teacher and this helps;
  - Atmosphere – one of the best lessons was where I was completely relaxed, we all had a bit of a laugh, a joke but we also got some serious work done;
  - I liked French because we went round the class asking about each other and the lecturer was very friendly and approachable. I am not good with languages so the lecturer helped me a lot. At the same time you passed the assessments so you were still doing the work;
  - When she brought cheeses to taste and things like that;
  - The drama lesson was good and in that we were made to do things in front of people we didn't really know and they helped us bond as a group. Working with new people helped us get to know each other and feel comfortable with each other;
  - I always find it easier to learn in a friendly atmosphere rather than one that's full of tension;
  - You're more nervous if you have to work with people you don't know but this breaks the ice.
6. Whose responsibility is it to ensure that you learn to pass assessments – yours or your lecturers – what do you think the roles of lecturing and student are?
- There is only so much a lecturer can do;
  - If you don't do the work there is nothing they can do;
  - The lecturer can only go so far, the rest is up to you;
  - At first I would have said both but now I think it's the student;
  - The lecturer can't do the work for you – they can't sit the exam;
  - You need to go further past that point;
  - Both definitely both;
  - You're not going to pass without the help of your lecturer but you have got to work hard as well or it won't work;
  - They have a responsibility to make sure you understand and make sure you understand what you are going to be getting in the assessment and what you have to do because sometimes I've been confused about what you have to do;

- Its your job to go away and study for it and built on the knowledge they gave you to learn;
- We were given a handout and it took about a week before people started saying they were really not sure and eventually we found everyone was in the same boat so we went back to the lecturer and asked;
- So its a give and take thing – but you've got to put the work in, you've got to do whats set but the lecturer has got to give you a little one on one time so you can say just before we do the assessment there is one more thing I need you to go over;
- Its definitely mine, the lecturer can only do so much, at the end of the day its mine.

Does this sound right? I will in due course let you see and comment on Chapter 5 of my thesis where I discuss all of this (I am of course happy to let you read all of my drafts as I produce them!).

Thank you for your help.

John Allan  
07.06.04

**STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT:  
MEETING OF 27 MAY 2004**

**ACADEMIC PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

**1. Introduction**

In common with other organisations across the public and private sectors, Colleges, their staff, HMIE, SFEFC and other stakeholders use Performance Indicators to measure and monitor their performances. This paper presents discussion of the College Academic Portfolio Performance Indicators.

**2. Background**

In common with organisations across the public and private sector, Performance Indicators (PI's) are used to measure and monitor the performance of Colleges by their staff, by HMIE and SFEFC and by other stakeholders. In September 2003 the Funding Council published for the first time sector Performance Indicators (for academic year 2001/2002) - around the same time as the Scottish Executive announced a review of the publication of PIs in the schools sector.

**3. 2001/2002 Data**

A copy of our PI's is attached - Appendix A. The Clerk to the Board can provide a copy of the PI's for all colleges and they are also available on the SFC website ([www.sfc.ac.uk](http://www.sfc.ac.uk)).

Tables 1, 2 and 3 present college PIs compared to those of  
(the Central Scotland Colleges Group) and the sector.

**TABLE 1      SSR1, SSR2, COMPLETION, SARU AND TQFE DATA AVERAGES**

	SSR1	SSR2	Completion	SARU	TQFE
	95	88	83	77	89
	92	92	88	79	78
	92	83	80	71	83
	94	79	81	80	65
Sector	92	87	84	74	84

**TABLE 2      FE and HE COMPLETION AND SARU**

	FE Completion	FE SARU	HE Completion	HE SARU
	80	74	91	80
	86	79	92	80
	80	68	81	73
	83	80	76	80
Sector	83	74	86	74

**TABLE 3      FE and HE SRR1 and SRR2**

	FE Completion	FE SARU	HE Completion	HE SARU
	94	84	97	91
	91	90	92	93

			03/04 - 5	
	91	83	93	84
	92	82	95	77
Sector	91	86	92	88

Key:

SSR1	Percentage of students who stay beyond first 25% of programme
SSR2	Percentage of students who remain on the programme until it ends
Completion	Percentage of students who complete programme (certification)
SARU	Percentage of individual units passed
TQFE	Percentage of lecturing staff with teaching qualification, further education or equivalent
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education

#### 4. Discussion

Performance Indicators are of course not unproblematic. There are well known, strong and persistent linkages between drop out rates, success rates and social and economic background factors. Drop out rates and completion rates may for example be affected by positive outcomes like students leaving to take up employment, and of course policies of widening access and inclusion may result in poorer certification outcomes. As a consequence, HMIE have begun to encourage a focus on so called "soft-indicators" and "distance travelled". That is, the progress made by individuals against norm rather than peer referenced factors. Quite simply, how much progress has each individual made not only in terms of assessment outcomes, but also in terms of attendance and punctuality and in relation to more difficult measure social and emotional "maturity" factors. Tables 1, 2 and 3 do however present a useful set of benchmarks for monitoring future progress. It will be noted that Table 1 illustrates that the College out-performs the sector on each of the indicators but is out-performed by Cumbernauld College in 3 out of the 5 indicators. It is however difficult to know what conclusions to draw from the suggested relationship between performance and the number of staff with TQFE qualification or equivalent or indeed the relationship between PIs and performance in HMIE Review.

Tables 2 and 3 drill down to a lower level. We know that we need to concentrate on FE completion, FE SARU and FE SSR2. Members will be aware however of the local social and economic context and the relatively poor performance of schools.

Members will be interested also in the data provided in the appendix and in particular their attention is drawn to the high number of students who are not assessed and the high numbers gaining partial success. This is because of our large community leisure programme and the number of work based programmes spanning more than one academic year.

#### 5. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee give consideration to the targets which it wishes to set for performance indicators within the 2004/2005 Operational Plan. (Members should note that performance indicators for 2002/2003 will not be published until this September and for 2003/2004 not until September 2005).

Table 1: Student Enrolments by Level and Mode of Attendance for 1999-00, 2000-01 and 2001-02

All enrolments including Vocational and Non-vocational

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
1999 - 2000	653	8,018	8,671	206	1,226	1,432	859	9,244	10,103
2000 - 2001	635	10,909	11,544	199	1,431	1,630	834	12,340	13,174
2001- 2002	896	10,058	10,954	357	1,444	1,801	1,253	11,502	12,755

Source: SFEFC FES Returns 1999-2000 , 2000-2001 and 2001-02

Table 2: Student Enrolments by Gender, Level and Mode of Attendance 2001-2002

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Full-Time	362	534	896	150	207	357	512	741	1,253
Part-Time	3,756	6,302	10,058	624	820	1,444	4,380	7,122	11,502
Total	4,118	6,836	10,954	774	1,027	1,801	4,892	7,863	12,755

Source: SFEFC FES Return 2001 - 2002

Table 3: Student Enrolments by Age\*, Level and Mode of Attendance 2001-2002

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Under 18 years	472	2,895	3,367	75	13	88	547	2,908	3,455
18 to 20 years	141	460	601	97	112	209	238	572	810
21 to 24 years	52	516	568	46	137	183	98	653	751
25 to 40 years	197	3,207	3,404	121	820	941	318	4,027	4,345
41 and over	34	2,980	3,014	18	362	380	52	3,342	3,394
Total	896	10,058	10,954	357	1,444	1,801	1,253	11,502	12,755

Source: SFEFC FES Returns 2001-2002

\*Age is age of student as of the 1st August 2001

Table 4: College Funding Details for 2001-02, 2002-2003 and 2003-04

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Grant in Aid:	£5,283,559	£5,228,167	£5,326,041
Fee Waiver Claim:	£695,074	£713,812	£869,674
Bursary Allocation:	£850,314	£724,754	£892,924
Weighted SUMs:	51,474	*n/a	*n/a
Weighted SUMs Target:	43,181	43,202	43,202

Grant-in-aid 2003-2004: Figures as at 9 July 2003 (circular FE/22/03)

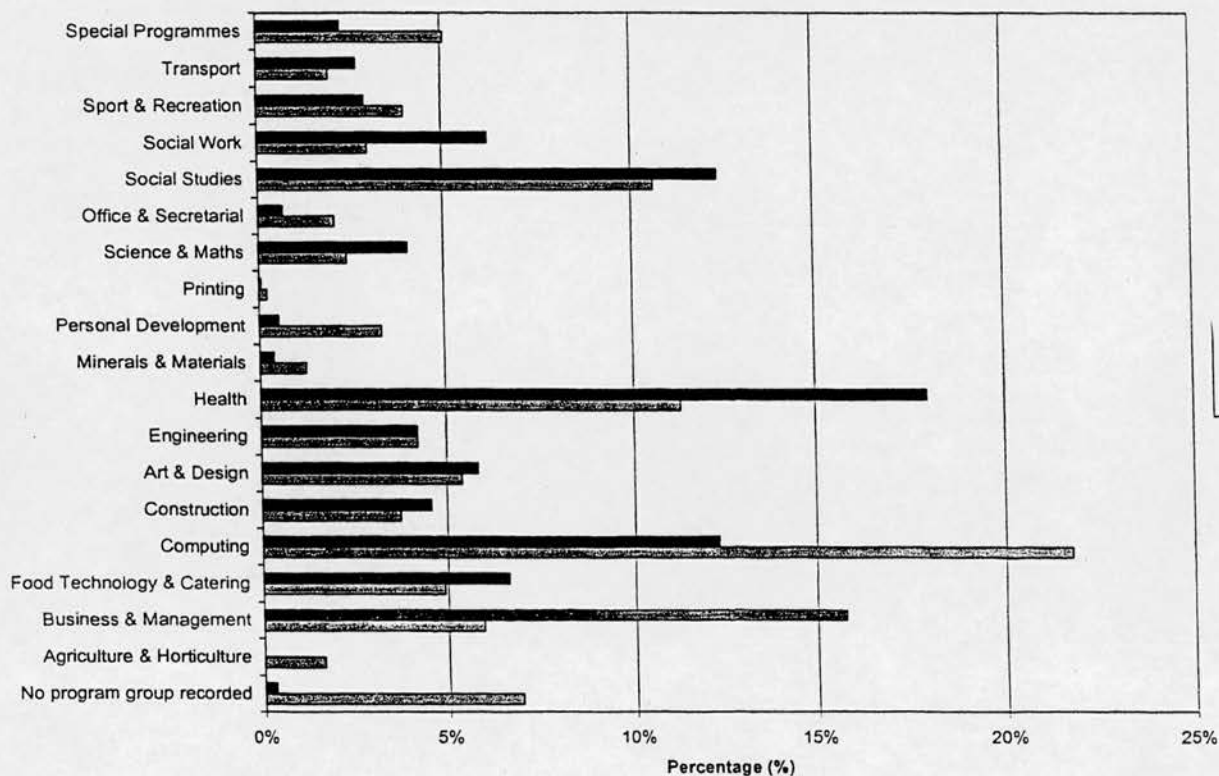
\*n/a - Figure is not available at this date

Table 5: Staffing Figures in Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) 2001-2002

	Permanent			Temporary			All Staff		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Teaching	88	8	96	0	32	32	88	40	128
Non-Teaching	72	10	82	5	6	11	77	16	93
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>221</b>

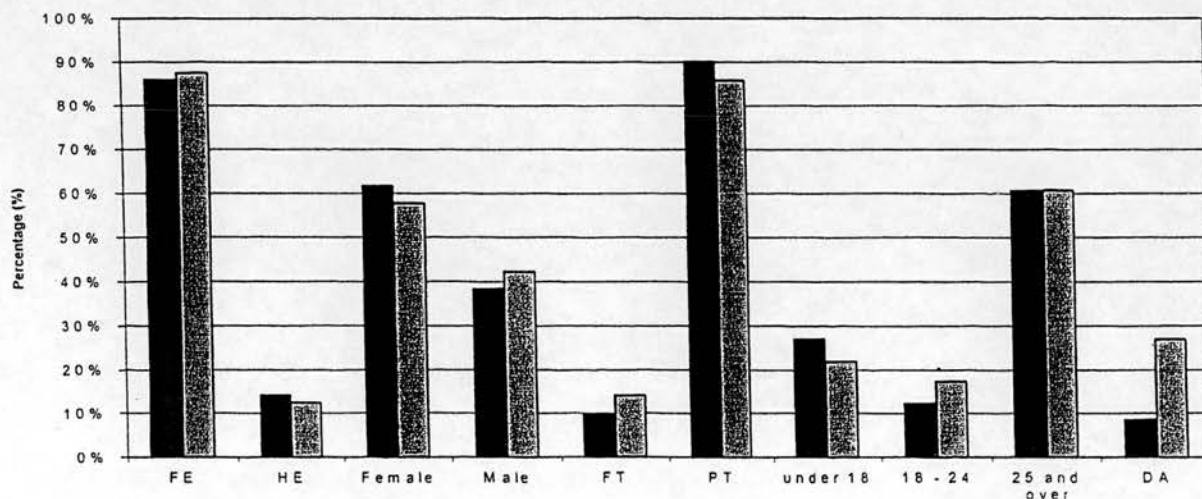
Source: SFEFC Staffing Return 2001-2002

Graph 1: Percentage of Enrolments by Dominant Programme Group; College and Scotland Figures



Source: SFEFC FES Return 2001-02

Graph 2 : Percentage of Enrolments by Level, Gender, Mode of Study, Age and those from the most disadvantaged areas\*



\* DA= Enrolments from the Most Disadvantaged Areas

Source: SFEFC FES Return 2001-02



## COLLEGE

is situated on the outskirts of a pleasant open site. There are two main annexes within half a mile distance from the main campus.

The College currently has four Curriculum Teams:

- Business, Arts and Continuing Education
- Care, Hairdressing and Beauty Studies
- Construction and Environmental Studies
- Information Technology, Engineering and Computing Studies

The College Board has a range of delegated functions under the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992. The Board's membership reflects local community interests, industry and commerce, with both staff and student members represented.

Clackmannan College serves Clackmannanshire and the Stirling area and offers specialist courses to students from throughout Scotland. As part of its expansion programme, the College is seeking a: -

### **PART TIME TEMPORARY LECTURER IN: Business, Arts & Continuing Education (BACE)**

Reporting to the Senior Lecturer.

#### ***The Post***

The College offers full-time and part-time programmes, ranging from uncertificated work through to HNC/HND level and short courses.

The courses are offered flexibly and the successful applicant will be prepared to teach day, twilight or evening classes.

The student groups consist of full-time students, part-time students on day release from local employers and centres, and students attending on an individual basis. There are also links with local schools, and a large community learning programme, which is delivered throughout the geographical area, covered by Clackmannanshire and Stirling local authorities.

The duties required may include all or an appropriate balance of the following:

- Formally structured teaching
- Internal Verification/Quality Assurance
- Course planning and development
- Formal and informal supervision of student learning
- Student assessments and monitoring of standards
- Liaison with students and external sponsoring agencies
- The maintenance of personal professional standards
- Participation in planning and assessment meetings
- Academic counselling of students
- Delivery of short courses
- Participation in the College's self evaluation process
- Attendance at relevant staff training events

### **Essential Requirement**

The successful applicant must have experience of dealing with young people with Additional Support Needs and ideally have a qualification in Special Needs, Youth Work or Social Work in addition to a teaching qualification. Related experience would be an advantage. The subjects to be taught include Communication, Numeracy and Personal and Social Development.

### **Principal Location**

Main site and in the area covered by Clackmannanshire and Stirling Councils.

### **Salary**

Clackmannan College lecturing scale with placement within range SCP1-11 (£18,681 - £27,834).

### **Conditions of Service**

Clackmannan College lecturing staff conditions will apply.

Teaching contact time; and may include variable hours per week plus preparation.

### **The Person**

The successful applicant will have: -

- ambition and the potential to develop;
- qualified to an appropriate professional standard;
- a relevant qualification in the area wishing to lecture;
- knowledge and understanding of SQA (formerly SCOTVEC) procedures in relation to quality assurance;
- a strong commitment to vocational education;
- a high degree of stamina;
- a driving licence and access to a car, and be willing to use it for College purposes;
- proven skills in communication, and in imparting skills, knowledge and understanding.

College  
Business, Arts and Continuing Education Team

Academic Portfolio Review: Delivery  
January 2005

Theme: *Working towards a Learning Strategy for  
**all** students*

(Student)

## Working towards a Learning Strategy

Business, Arts and Continuing Education - Team

- 
- Representing Student
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## Learning Strategy

### What is a Learning Strategy ?

- It gives a clear statement of what students **want** and **need** from our College.
- It is **for** students
- It is about **learning** not teaching

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### What does it do?

- It **focuses** all activities in College towards the students
- It gives **direction** to staff about the service we need to provide
- It **involves** students
- It **improves** the students' experience of College

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**'It is the things that are important to students in their experience of learning'  
(Ellington, Percival and Race, 1993)**

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### **Strategies for effective learning**

- 1. Wanting to learn
- 2. Needing to learn
- 3. Learning by doing
- 4. Getting feedback on how the learning is going
- 5. Making sense of what has been learned

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### **1. Wanting to learn**

- Provide the courses students want
- To achieve their goals
- Facilities that meet their needs
- The right information at the right time
- Information on how and where to get guidance and support

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## 2. Needing to learn

- To have their individual needs met
- To have the information
- To be taught in a way that matches their style of learning
- To know exactly what they have to learn to achieve
- To know when they will be assessed
- To know how they will be assessed

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## 3. Learning by doing

- Time to practice what they have learned
- Space to study comfortably
- Support to learn

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## 4. Getting feedback on how the learning is going

- Positive and prompt feedback
- Verbal and written feedback
- Chance to ask for feedback when needed

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## 5. Making sense of what has been learned

- Time and space to make sense of what has been learned
- Work out how to apply new ideas to solve problems

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## Strategy for staff supporting students

### 1. Wanting to learn

- Having effective marketing
- Provide the courses students want
- Supporting students to set long and short-term goals
- Provide needs-led provision within an inclusive environment
- Integrated guidance and support

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## 2. Needing to learn

- Confidentiality and Disclosure is respected at all times
- Pre-Course/Interview and Selection Process – Systems in place
- Induction
- Identifying individual personal goals

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## 2. Needing to learn

- Students, who may benefit from, and have consented to additional support are signposted for Individual Needs Assessment, within college Quality Assurance Systems
- To be taught in a way that matches individual styles of learning

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## 2. Needing to learn

- Clear outlines of:
  - The curriculum
  - The learning outcomes
  - The aims and objectives of each session
- Assessment
- Additional support both specialist and subject specific

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## 3. Learning by doing

- Appropriate facilities and time to encourage and develop active learning
- Provide a suitable study environment
- Support to learn
  - (Working within the Support for Learning Services Framework)

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#### **4. Getting feedback on how the learning is going**

- Positive assessment process
- Ensure feedback is constructive and valid especially where negative feedback is required
- Regular reviews
- Verbal and written feedback of learner progress within the context of the course
- Opportunity to request feedback

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#### **5. Making sense of what has been learned**

- Time and space to make sense of learning by enabling students to:
- Work out how to apply new ideas to solve problems

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#### **6. Staff Training Requirements**

- There is a built in, ongoing, staff development programme to complement this Strategy
- A Staff Development Training Matrix implemented (Appendix A) to track training

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## **Draft proposal for Quality Assurance: Evaluating the Learning Strategy**

This strategy is a reflection of the needs of current students and it would be reasonable to assume these needs will change. Any learning strategy needs to be reviewed in terms of meeting learner needs. How should this be assessed without creating additional burden on students and staff?

Course reviews should include a focus on Learning Strategy. This could be achieved by grouping questions in line with the learning strategy. The example below demonstrates this.

### **THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK**

#### **Area A: Curriculum resources, processes and outcomes**

Elements:	Learning Strategy
A1 Programme design	Want
A2 Accommodation for learning and teaching	Want
A3 Equipment and materials	Want/ Need
A4 Staff	All
A5 Learning and teaching process	Doing/ Feedback/ Digesting
A6 Assessment	Need
A7 Learner progress and outcomes	Feedback
A8 Guidance and learner support	Want
A9 Quality assurance and improvement	All

## Area B: Leadership and quality management

Elements:	Learning Strategy
B1 Educational leadership, direction and management	All
B2 Access and inclusion	All
B3 Guidance and support	Wanting
B4 Resources and services to support the learner	All
B5 Staff	Need
B6 Quality assurance	All
B7 Quality improvement	All

## College - Learning Strategy

### **What is a Learning Strategy and why do we need one?**

- It gives a clear statement of what students **want** and **need** from our College.
- It is **for** students
- It is about **learning** not teaching

### **What does it do?**

- It **focuses** all activities in College towards the students
- It gives **direction** to staff about the service we need to provide
- It **involves** students
- It **improves** the students' experience of Clackmannan College

### **What is it?**

'It is the things that are important to students in their experience of learning' (Ellington, Percival and Race, 1993)

### **Strategies for effective learning**

#### **1. Wanting to learn**

Provide the course students want  
To achieve their goals  
Facilities that meet their needs  
The right information at the right time  
Information on how and where to get guidance and support

#### **2. Needing to learn**

To have their individual needs met  
To have the information  
To be taught in a way that matches their style of learning  
To know exactly what they have to learn to achieve  
To know when they will be assessed  
To know how they will be assessed

#### **3. Learning by doing**

Time to practice what they have learned  
Space to study comfortably  
Support to learn

#### **4. Getting feedback on how the learning is going**

Positive and prompt feedback  
Verbal and written feedback  
Chance to ask for feedback when needed

#### **5. Making sense of what has been learned**

Time and space to make sense of what has been learnt  
Work out how to apply new ideas to solve problems



## **Strategy for staff supporting students**

### **1. Wanting to learn**

- Having effective marketing to ensure:
  - Our marketing is in line with industry demands
  - Students have the right information at the right time
  - Course outlines are clear
  - Entry requirements are unambiguous and progression routes are clearly stated
- Provide the courses students want, to achieve both their personal and professional goals, whilst ensuring the design and delivery of the course meets the expectation of the students
- Supporting students to set long and short-term goals
- Provide needs led provision within an inclusive environment
- Integrated guidance and support

### **2. Needing to learn**

- At all times
  - Matters of a confidential nature are dealt with both sensitively and appropriately in-line with Staff Confidentiality and Disclosure Guidelines
- Pre-Course/Interview and Selection Process – Systems in place to ensure:
  - Fully accessible literature in a range of alternative formats
  - Documentation is user friendly and has been checked for readability
  - Appropriate sharing of information
- Induction - Relevant staff must ensure:
  - Core Skills Assessments are undertaken by students either pre-course or during students' induction
  - The results are used to ensure individual needs are met throughout the course with support built in, as required
  - This support may include the use of Individual Learning Plan
- Identifying individual personal goals to ensure:
  - Ample opportunity for students to disclosure throughout the year in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act Part IV

- Students who may benefit from, and have consented to additional support are signposted for Individual Needs Assessment within the following Quality Assurance Systems:
  - Toolkit of Quality Indicators for Needs Assessments (draft) leading to further development of PLSP
  - The Development of Support for Learning Services
  - Support for Learning Services Referral System
  - SQA Alternative Assessment Arrangements
  - Course Review
- A system in place to regularly review individual needs both within the Curriculum and Individual Learning Plans
- To be taught in a way that matches individual styles of learning
- Clear outlines of;
  - The curriculum
  - The learning outcomes
  - The aims and objectives of each session
- Assessment
  - To know when and how they will have achieved outcomes and to be clear about what the outcomes are
  - Allow students an opportunity to articulate, through formative assessment confidence in their learning
- Additional support both specialist and subject specific to be available, as and when required

### **3. Learning by doing**

- Appropriate facilities and time to encourage and develop active learning
  - Built in time to practice what students have learned in the context of both the course and individual goals
  - Opportunities to learn positively from any mistakes made
- Provide a suitable study environment including:
  - Opportunities to learn how to use the internet effectively

Support to learn (working within the Support for Learning Services Framework)

- Additional support within the classroom
- Access to specialised support

#### **4. Getting feedback on how the learning is going**

- Positive assessment process - prompt feedback with opportunities to learn positively from any mistakes
- Ensure feedback is constructive and valid especially where negative feedback is required
- Regular reviews – to enable students to see how the course fits together and where it is going
- Verbal and written feedback of learner progress within the context of the course should be accessible
- Opportunity to request feedback, when required

#### **5. Making sense of what has been learned**

- Time and space to make sense of learning by enabling students to:
  - Take ownership of their learning
  - Consider where it applies to previous and future learning
- Work out how to apply new ideas to solve problems

#### **6. Staff Training Requirements**

To support staff and ensure current skills are continually updated it is recommended:

- There is a built in, ongoing, staff development programme to complement this Strategy
- Training is evaluated within Quality Assurance systems to ensure:
  - It is fully evaluated for content, relevance and effectiveness
  - Staff reflect and feedback on the impact (if any) the training has had in changing own practice and the effectiveness of this
- A Staff Development Training matrix implemented (**Appendix A**) to effectively track training and impact against Learning Strategy recommendations
  - This matrix would be used in conjunction with Staff IAP's





**QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT OUTCOME DESCRIPTION 8: STAFF DEVELOPMENT – LEARNING, TEACHING AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATION: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL AND SELF REFLECTION CHECKLIST****Introduction:**

This project outcome describes the procedures whereby curriculum teams will review the Learning and Teaching process, through classroom observation.

**Purpose:**

To enhance the system of classroom observation to ensure that records are evaluative and lead to change in practice through self reflection, systematic review within teams and continuous professional development

**Contents:**

- What Works Well: Curriculum Delivery Classroom observation protocol
- What Works Well: Curriculum Delivery Classroom observation self-reflection checklist and procedures

**Appendix:**

1. Self-evaluation report form
2. Key Prompts A5 - The Learning Process
3. Key Prompts A5 – The Teaching Process
4. Key Prompts A5 – Context and Planning for Learning and Teaching
5. Key Prompts A7 – Learning Progress and Achievement
6. Key Prompts A7 – Learning Attainment
7. Key Prompts A7 – What Works Well Research: Summary of student views



## **WHAT WORKS WELL: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL**

This is the protocol for the college system classroom observation within the Quality Assurance and CPD Programme.

- All lecturing staff should be observed once during each academic year, in the case of community years beginning in year one of a contract;
- Lecturing staff are responsible in the first instance for seeking the agreement of a peer observer (CTLs/SLs will assist if this is not possible);
- The member of staff who is observed is responsible for completing the agreed self-observation proforma, following discussion with the observer (see appendix);
- The original proforma must be kept by the person observed;
- A copy of the proforma must be passed by the person observed to the appropriate curriculum manager all documentation must be kept, in a secure place and will be available only for quality monitoring purposes;
- The curriculum manager is responsible for disclosing copies only for quality monitoring purposes, copies must not be passed to any other third party;
- Curriculum Managers are responsible for ensuring that observation reports inform CDP plans, and with colleagues are used to inform whole college staff training;
- Curriculum managers are responsible for ensuring that suitable, anonymised extracts from self-observation reports are used to inform discussion of learning and teaching and teaching approaches are introduced on the basis of the discussion;
- Curriculum managers are responsible for the sharing of good practice in learning and teaching across the college, using the appropriate pages within the college intranet.

## **WHAT WORKS WELL: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SELF REFLECTION CHECKLIST**

As an integral component of their professional task lecturing staff are invited to consider whether or not they have promoted student learning by:

- Before a class and in the light of any student special needs:
  - ordering and collecting all required quantities of equipment, materials and handouts.
  - ensuring accommodation was appropriate for activity and appropriately laid-out.
  - collecting class registration and any other documentation required.
- Providing a brief overview of the work and assessments to be covered (by the class and/or by individuals) and how they link to other parts of the programme, if appropriate and how they link to work and assessments covered previously, if appropriate.
- Beginning each class on time.
- Completing all required documentation on first meeting of the class and with all 'new' students thereafter.
- Completing attendance register in full.
- Completing record of achievement, confirming progress to individual students as you do so.
- Completing record of work.
- Returning register and all documentation as required.
- Making arrangements for any special needs arising, informing colleagues as required.
- Correcting, marking and storing as appropriate all assessment evidence so that it is available for monitoring and for internal and external verification purposes.
- Undertaking other duties as required by Curriculum Team Leader.
- Developing mature relationships with students, through the creation of an appropriate and supportive learning environment which stretches, challenges and rewards students;
- Developing fair, helpful and responsive solutions to students learning needs;
- Developing approaches which are fun and enjoyable;
- Using appropriate classroom management techniques;
- Developing independent, meta-level learning skills and promoting learning in a wider sense;

- Facilitating, undertaking and transformation of knowledge for assessment purposes and linking developing theory to the improvement of practice and practical skills;
- Providing formative assessment feedback which challenge students to be critical about material presented to them and to develop a questioning approach to learning;
- Raising students expectation of themselves by setting high standards and providing a model for development of creative and craft skills where appropriate;
- Reflecting on the class and how student learning might be further promoted and what personal staff training needs may be required;
- Adding to a persona log of thoughts and reflections;
- Discussing issues with colleagues.

The appendix provides key prompts based on HMIe review elements A5 and A7 and detail of what students said works well in helping them to learn to pass assessments, in response to research as part of a Doctoral Thesis.

## What Works Well: Staff Self Evaluation Form

Date of observation \_\_\_\_\_

Person Observed \_\_\_\_\_

Who Observed \_\_\_\_\_

Class Group \_\_\_\_\_

### What Worked Well?

(For guidance for this refer to 'key prompts' documents)

### Recommendations for CPD

Signed Observed \_\_\_\_\_ Signed Observer \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Original to be kept by observed ☐

Copy to CTL ☐

**KEY PROMPTS A5 – THE LEARNING PROCESS****Learner Motivation and engagement**

- involvement
- attitude
- teamwork
- questioning, debate, expression of views
- application to task, quality of work
- attendance, punctuality

**Use of resources by learners**

- teaching staff and other learners as resources
- subject-related materials, equipment, facilities
- ICT: for management and presentation of work, and for information and communication
- library and learner resource centre services
- learning support services

**Reflection on learning**

- development as reflective learners
- insight into personal abilities and difficulties in learning
- awareness of different learning approaches
- feedback to improve performance

**Independence in learning**

- investigation, independent thinking, critical evaluation
- confidence in learning
- accessing and selecting resources including ICT
- accessing support/advice/assistance
- identifying and working toward learning goals

**Progress and outcomes of learning**

- form basic to deeper levels of understanding
- development and application of knowledge
- development of skills: personal and learning core, vocational, for employability, for citizenship

**KEY PROMPTS A5 – THE TEACHING PROCESS****Application of professional and subject knowledge by teaching staff**

- content of learning activities
- management and consolidation of learning
- reflection on and evaluation of teaching practice
- up to date, reflecting current industry practice and national and local issues in the subject area
- communication of interest/enthusiasm in subject

**Application of good practice in teaching**

- awareness of good practice in subject area
- adoption of good practice in subject area
- awareness of good practice in learning and teaching
- adoption of good practice in learning and teaching

**Focus on learners**

- individual and group needs, including positive attitudes to social and cultural diversity
- encouragement of learners to express views
- encouragement of learners to extend and justify answers
- challenge
- affirmation, confidence building
- promotion of learning skills and strategies

**Contextualising learning**

- building on learners' prior knowledge, experience and attitudes to learning
- preparing learners to employment and/or progression

**Use of resources (including ICT)**

- materials, facilities, placements, partners
- IC, online resources
- Support and training for learners in using resources, including ICT based

**Promotion of achievement**

- learners' knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject area
- learners' personal development
- learner reflection and self-assessment
- teaching staff feedback and guidance to learners
- teaching staff as models of effective learners
- formative assessment to promote learning
- summative assessment to affirm achievement



**KEY PROMPTS – CONTEXT AND PLANNING FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING****Staff-learner relationships**

- staff commitment to learner progress and well being
- staff-learner relationships and ethos
- relationships and ethos among learners in class groups
- staff skills in group managements and promotion of positive ethos and mutual respect
- staff and learner commitment to values and policies that shape the college culture

**Planning of learning activities**

- responsiveness to learner aims and needs including positive references to cultural and social diversity
- learner involvement in and contributions to planning
- match with demands/constraints of delivery mode
- incorporation of core skills development
- structure and sequencing of learners' work
- links across curriculum
- responsiveness to the range of contexts and delivery modes for learner learning
- staff involvement in curriculum planning decisions

**Physical environment**

- match with requirements for curriculum delivery
- layout relative to level of learner interaction required
- control of risk
- access for all learners

**Standards set by staff**

- match with the academic level of programme and unit
- standards required in content and presentation of coursework
- standards of conduct in classrooms, workshops, work placement and other learning environments
- commitment of staff and learners to standards jointly set
- consistency of standards with those set by the college

## **KEY PROMPTS A5 – LEARNER PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT**

- progress from prior attainment, achievement, learning and experience
- skills:
  - personal and learning core (communication, numeracy, information technology, working with others and problem solving)
  - vocational
  - for employability
  - for citizenship

## **KEY PROMPTS A7 – LEARNING ATTAINMENT**

- attainment of formal qualifications
- attainment in industry-related and tests
- retention
- post-course success including progression to he, relevant area and level of employment
- success in award schemes, competitions etc

**KEY PROMPTS A7 – WHAT WORKS WELL? SUMMARY OF STUDENT VIEWS**

- Is approachable/friendly/treats you like an adult
- Provides mock formative assessments
- Provides revision practice/quizzes
- Is helpful/kind
- Explains what is required for assessment clearly
- Spends time with individuals
- Is patient/builds confidence/makes you feel comfortable/relaxed style/easy to get on with
- Spreading assessment over course
- Gives homework
- Self study
- Uses group work/group competitions
- Gives well structured lectures
- Use of IT/Internet/Library/AVA/Board Work
- Use of 'handouts'/worksheets
- Help with research
- Relates learning to real life
- Is fun/enthusiastic/enjoyable
- Gives encouragement
- Is fair
- Combining knowledge from different classes
- Use of practical work
- Gives support
- Uses diagrams
- Gives time
- Well organised classes
- Gives variety
- Mind maps
- Gives feedback/remediation/tutorials
- Makes you work hard
- Demonstrates correct way/method
- Speaks clearly and concisely
- Sets in context/links to theory
- Involves all
- Using models
- Makes interesting
- Asks challenging questions/stimulates thought
- Gives comprehensive notes
- Makes sure you understand before moving on
- Emphasises important points
- Facilitates discussion
- Able to ask questions
- Peer support facilitated
- Sticks to subject matter

## QUALITY ASSURANCE PROJECT

### STUDENT EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE – LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESMENT: WHAT WORKS WELL?

#### Introduction

The questionnaire asks students to provide feedback on the learning, teaching and assessment process.

Students are invited to complete a questionnaire towards the end of each semester.

Response will be used to inform staff continuous professional development and college quality assurance processes.

COURSE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Whole course evaluation ☐

Unit evaluation ☐

Name of unit \_\_\_\_\_

	Agree completely	Agree Mostly	Disagree Mostly	Disagree Completely
Staff student relationships are appropriate: I am treated like an adult				
Staff are: helpful, responsive, supportive, and enthusiastic				
Classes are fun and enjoyable				
I am helped to learn specifically for assessment				
I am given feedback on what I need to do improve my work				
I am helped to develop independent learning skills and encouraged to think about how I learn best				
High standards are expected of me in: course work, attitude, attendance and punctuality				
I am expected to respect others and their views and be a team player				
Clear links are made between classroom work and the world of work				
I know how well I am doing				

	Agree completely	Agree Mostly	Disagree Mostly	Disagree Completely
Classes are well organised				
The physical environment is of high standard				
A wide variety of teaching approaches are used, including use of the Learning Zone and IT				
I am expected to be good at writing, arithmetic and IT as well as my vocational subject				
I am expected to express my views and contribute to discussion in class.				
Links are made with my previous knowledge between different units, subjects and classes				

Please use the space below to tell us what works well for you in teaching, learning and assessment. What is it that is done by lecturers which helps you most?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your responses will be used to make improvements to learning, teaching and assessment.



Figure 1. Enrolments by the Mode of Attendance and Age Band 2001-02

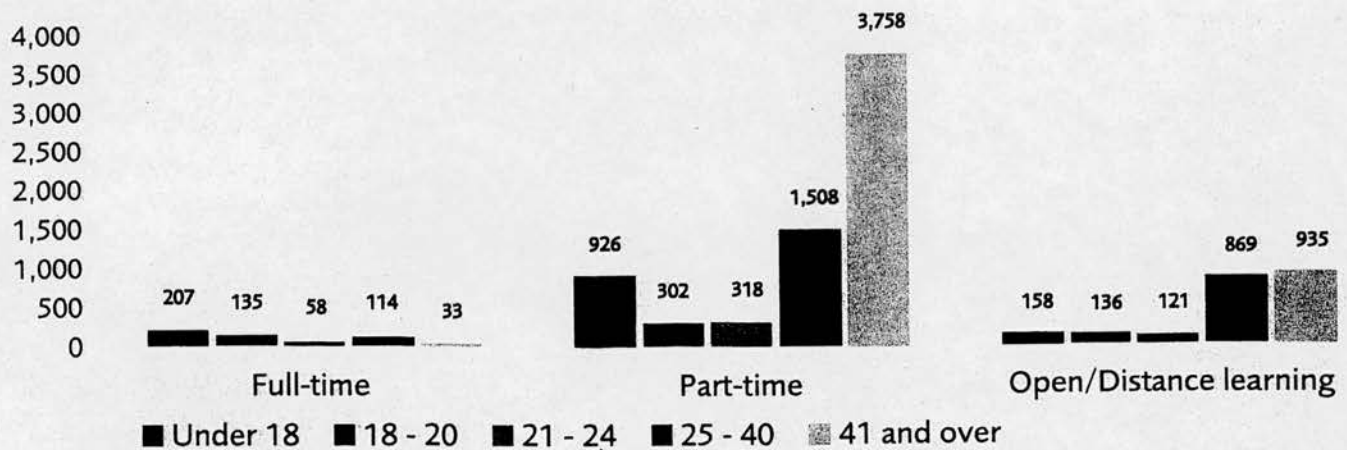


Figure 2. Percentage of Enrolments by Level and Gender 2001-02

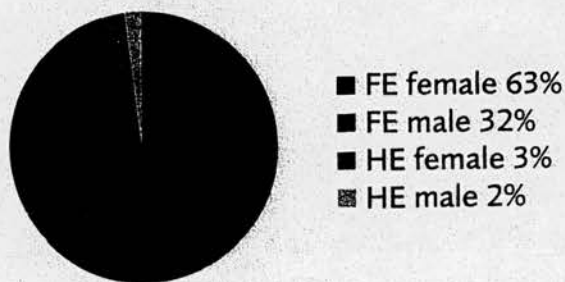


Figure 3. SUMs by Mode of Attendance, 1999-00 to 2001-02

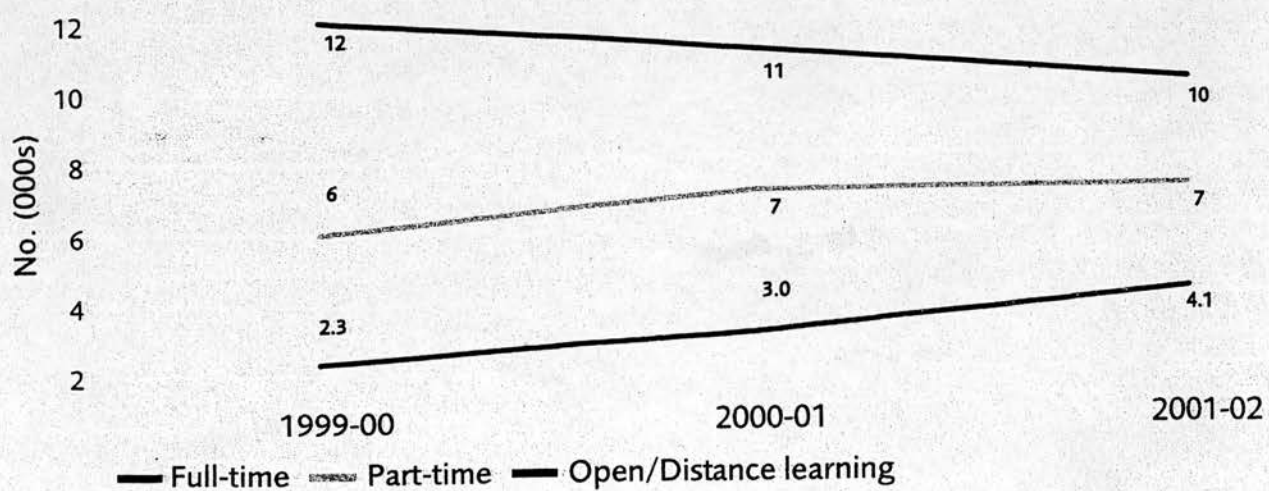


Table 1. Performance against Activity Targets 2000-01 and 2001-02

2000-01				2001-02			
WSUMs target	WSUMs delivered	WSUMs target achieved?	Difference from WSUMs target	WSUMs target	WSUMs delivered	WSUMs target achieved?	Difference from WSUMs target
21,828	22,720	Yes	+4.1%	23,064	24,014	Yes	+4.1%

Where a college under-enrolled by less than 3% in 2000-01 or 2% in 2001-02 they were not penalised by the council.

Table 2. Early Student Retention 2001-02

Mode	No. of enrolments	Enrolments meeting funding qualifying date	Early student retention percentage	
			College PI	Sector PI
FE Full-time	447	394	88%	86%
FE Part-time	8,730	8,711	100%	97%
HE Full-time	161	153	95%	90%
HE Part-time	327	320	98%	95%

Table 2a. Student Retention 2001-02

Mode	Weighted enrolments meeting funding qualifying date	No. of weighted enrolments completing course	Student retention percentage	
			College PI	Sector PI
FE Full-time	8,087	6,150	76%	78%
FE Part-time	8,578	7,892	92%	94%
HE Full-time	2,271	2,066	91%	83%
HE Part-time	1,272	1,152	91%	94%

Weighted enrolments are enrolments that have been adjusted to take account of the number of learning hours required to complete the course. The weighting is required to ensure that a 1 year full time course is distinguished from a 1 day course.

Figure 4. Total Student Enrolments 2001-02

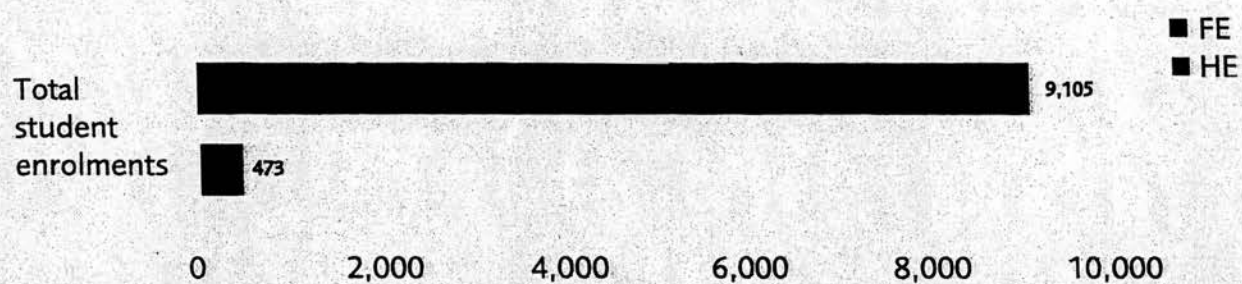


Figure 5. Percentage of Student Enrolments from Deprived areas, Social Inclusion Partnership areas and on Special Programmes 2001-02

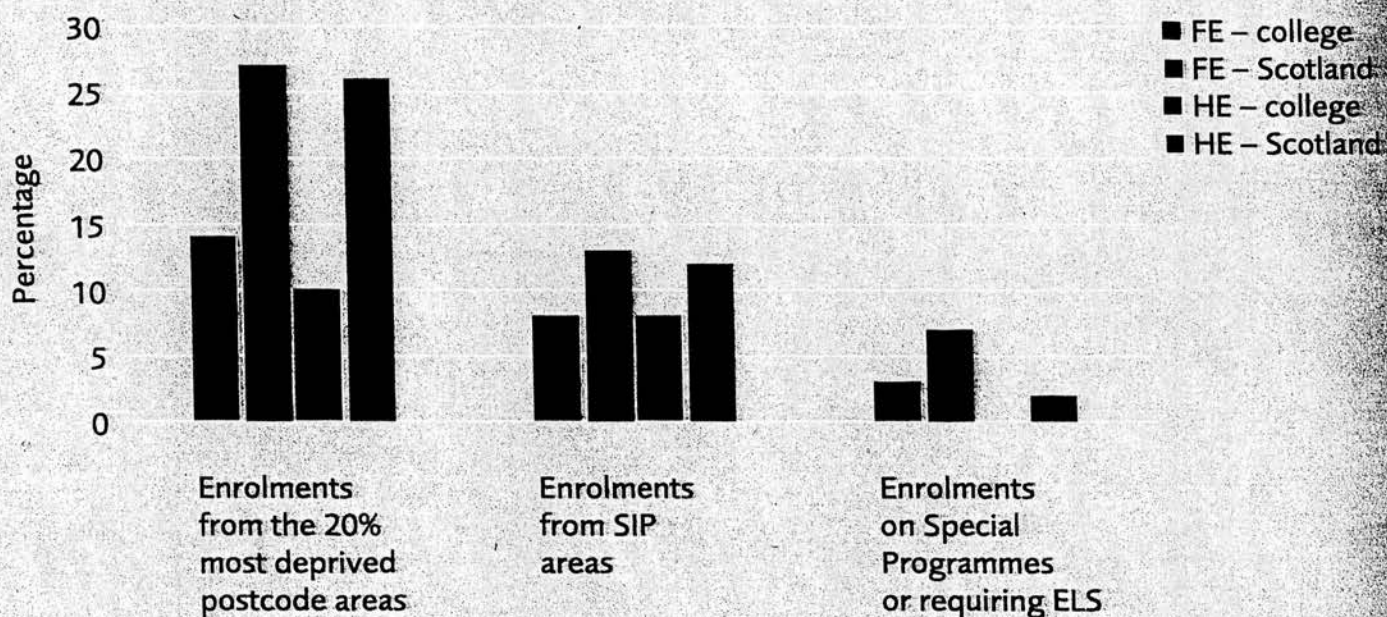


Table 3. Student Outcome 2001-02

2001-02	Weighted Enrolments	College PI	Sector PI
<b>FE enrolments on programmes with a national qualification aim</b>	<b>4,277</b>		
Completed programme	3,352	78%	83%
Of those completing the programme			
{ Successful or progressing to the next year	2,340	70%	75%
{ Not gaining award but may have achieved partial success	432	13%	18%
{ Not assessed	579	17%	7%
<b>FE enrolments on locally devised or individual tailored programmes</b>	<b>6,649</b>		
Completed programme	5,378	81%	83%
Of those completing the programme			
{ Successful or progressing to the next year	3,540	66%	83%
{ Not gaining award but may have achieved partial success	1,838	34%	17%
<b>HE enrolments on programmes with a national qualification aim</b>	<b>3,142</b>		
Completed programme	2,868	91%	86%
Of those completing the programme			
{ Successful or progressing to the next year	2,435	85%	81%
{ Not gaining award but may have achieved partial success	421	15%	17%
{ Not assessed	13	0%	2%

Excludes enrolments where SUMs are less than 4. The weighting factor is SUMs so that the programmes with more activity are given higher weight.

Figure 6. Percentage of Student Activity by Subject 2001-02

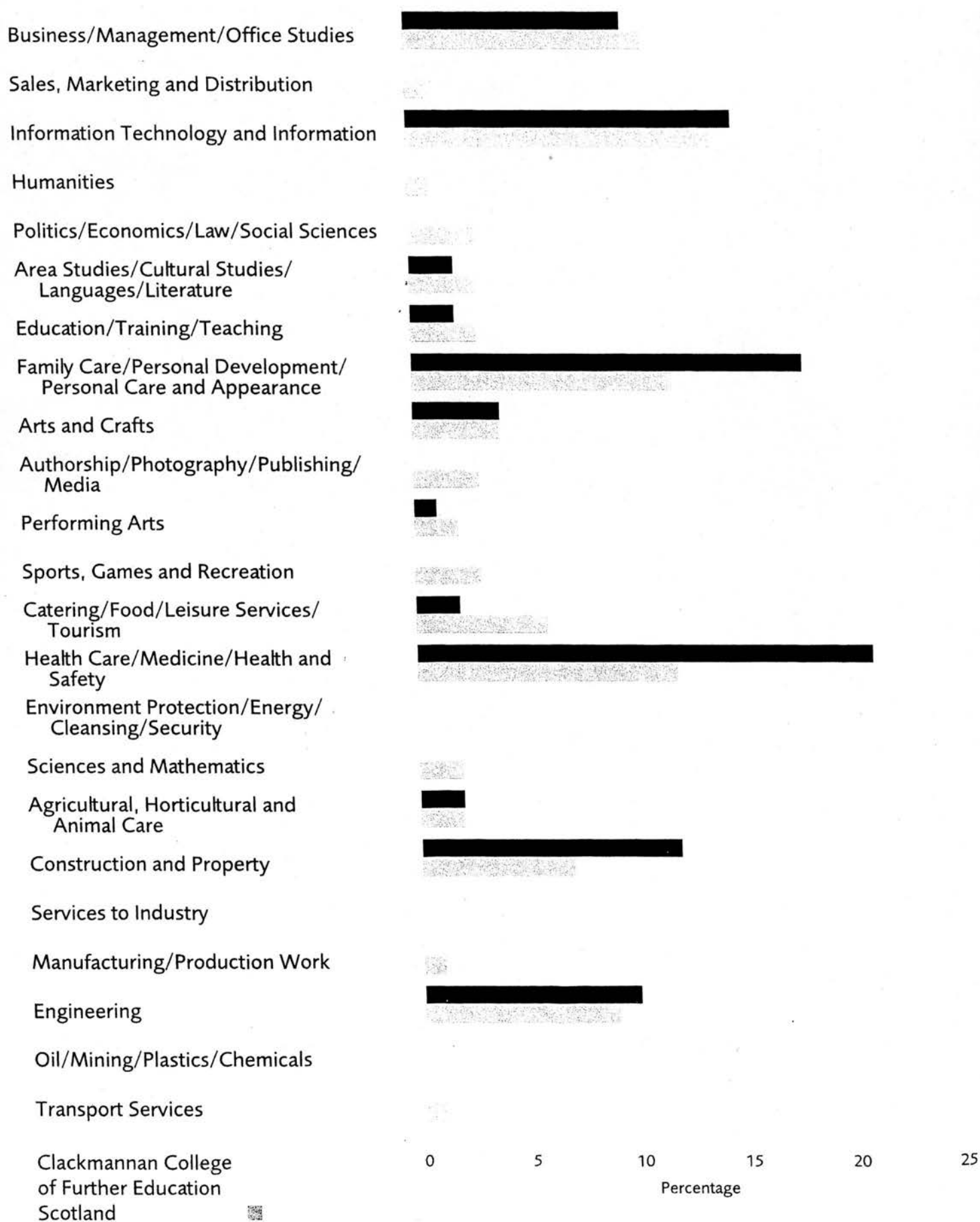


Table 4. Student Achievement Ratio by Assessment Credit of Learning (SARU) 2001-02

Level of Study 2001-02	FE	HE
Assessment credits on which the student is enrolled with the awarding body	7,552	2,469
Assessment credits achieved	5,586	1,977
Student achievement ratio by assessment credits of learning - college PI	74%	80%
Student achievement ratio by assessment credits of learning - sector PI	74%	74%

Table 5. Staff with Teaching Qualifications 2001-02

Permanent Full-time Teaching Staff 2001-02		PI	
Total Staff	No. with a teaching qualification	% with a Teaching Qualification College	Sector
44	39	89%	84%

Figure 7. Full-time Equivalent Staff 2001-02

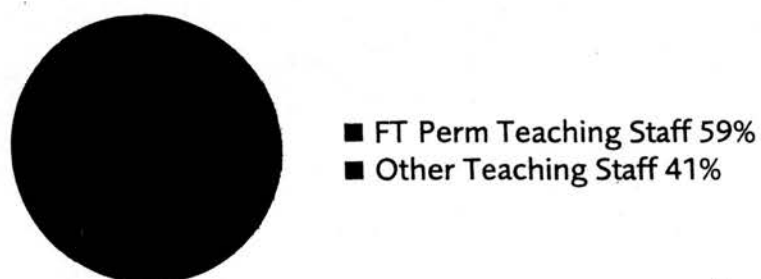




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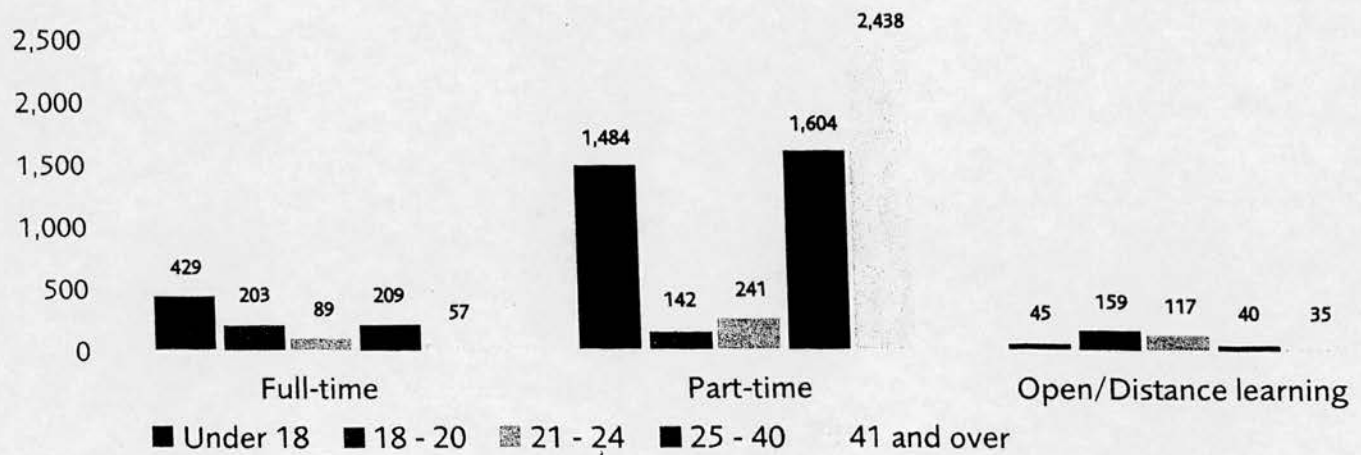


Figure 2. Percentage of Enrolments by Level and Gender 2001-02

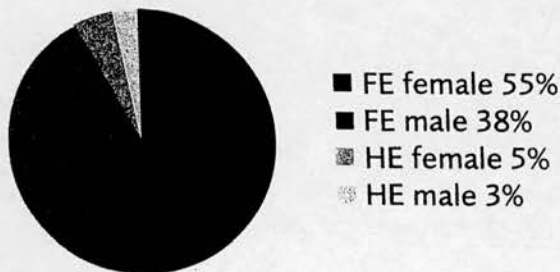


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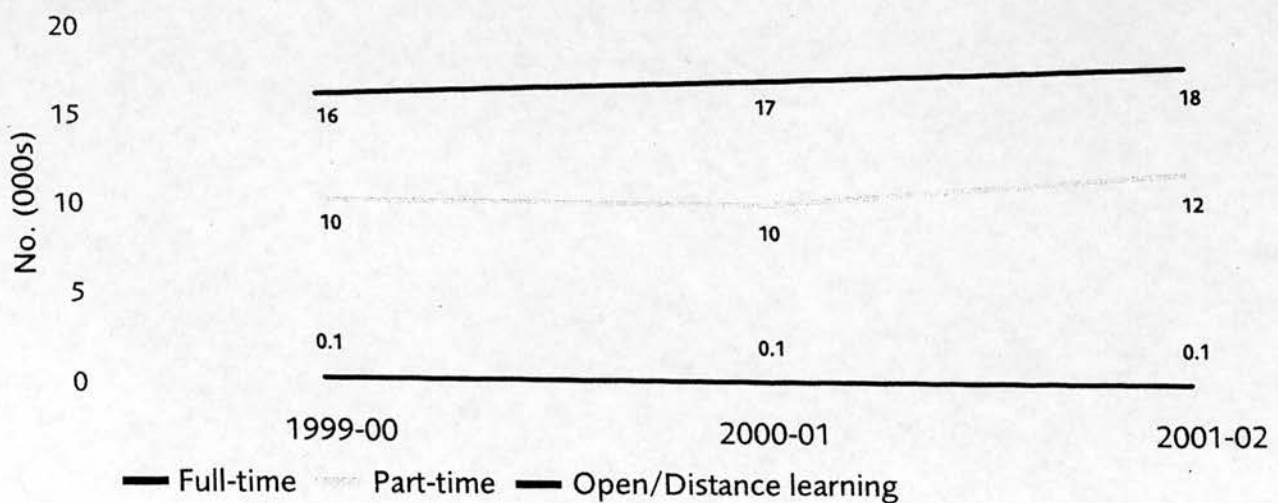


Table 1. Performance against Activity Targets 2000-01 and 2001-02

2000-01				2001-02			
WSUMs target	WSUMs delivered	WSUMs target achieved?	Difference from WSUMs target	WSUMs target	WSUMs delivered	WSUMs target achieved?	Difference from WSUMs target
28,074	28,437	Yes	+1.3%	29,490	30,479	Yes	+3.4%

Where a college under-enrolled by less than 3% in 2000-01 or 2% in 2001-02 they were not penalised by the council.

Table 2. Early Student Retention 2001-02

Mode	No. of enrolments	Enrolments meeting funding qualifying date	Early student retention percentage	
			College PI	Sector PI
FE Full-time	854	763	89%	86%
FE Part-time	6,070	5,986	99%	97%
HE Full-time	263	224	85%	90%
HE Part-time	336	319	95%	95%

Table 2a. Student Retention 2001-02

Mode	Weighted enrolments meeting funding qualifying date	No. of weighted enrolments completing course	Student retention percentage	
			College PI	Sector PI
FE Full-time	15,668	12,812	82%	78%
FE Part-time	10,756	10,538	98%	94%
HE Full-time	3,360	3,015	90%	83%
HE Part-time	1,751	1,705	97%	94%

Weighted enrolments are enrolments that have been adjusted to take account of the number of learning hours required to complete the course. The weighting is required to ensure that a 1 year full time course is distinguished from a 1 day course.

Figure 4. Total Student Enrolments 2001-02

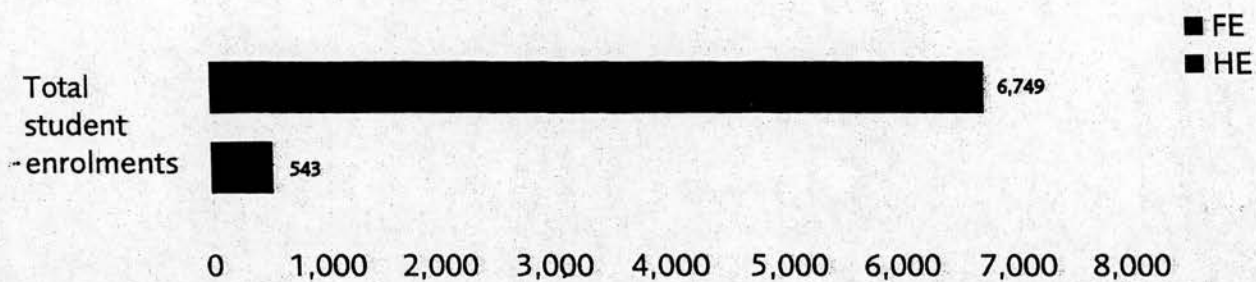


Figure 5. Percentage of Student Enrolments from Deprived areas, Social Inclusion Partnership areas and on Special Programmes 2001-02

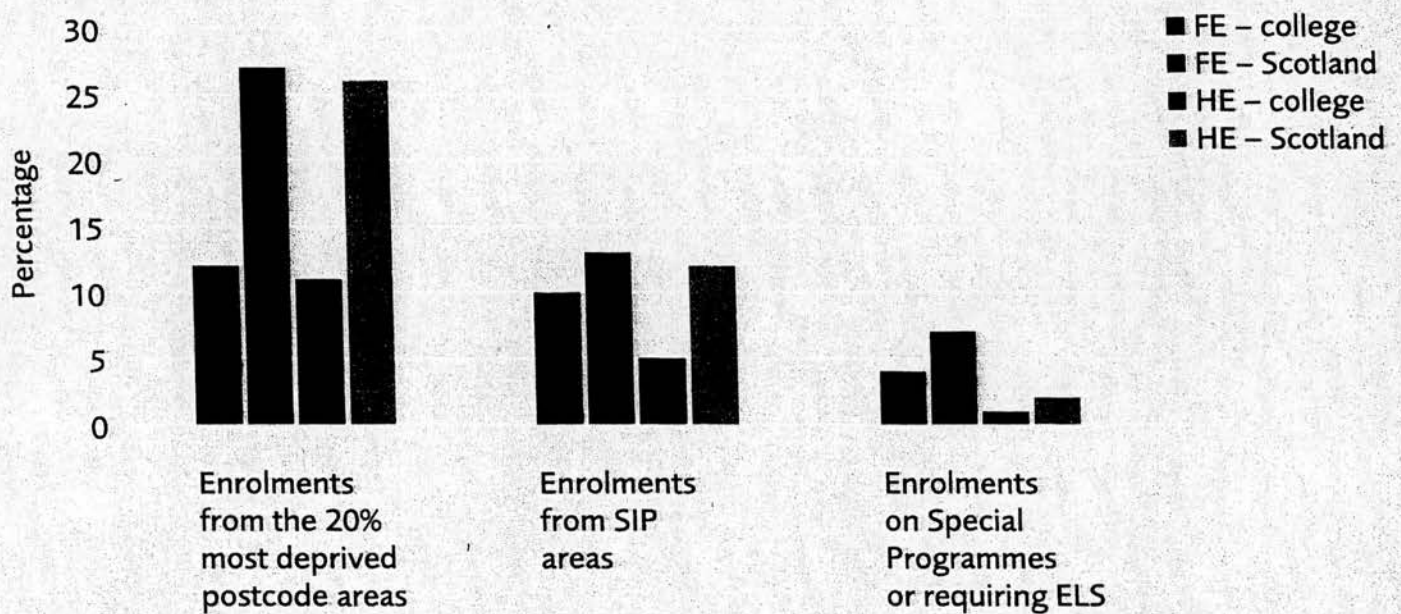


Table 3. Student Outcome 2001-02

2001-02	Weighted Enrolments	College PI	Sector PI
<b>FE enrolments on programmes with a national qualification aim</b>	<b>10,761</b>		
Completed programme	9,101	85%	83%
Of those completing the programme			
{ Successful or progressing to the next year	8,786	97%	75%
{ Not gaining award but may have achieved partial success	315	3%	18%
{ Not assessed	0	0%	7%
<b>FE enrolments on locally devised or individual tailored programmes</b>	<b>10,248</b>		
Completed programme	8,883	87%	83%
Of those completing the programme			
{ Successful or progressing to the next year	8,216	92%	83%
{ Not gaining award but may have achieved partial success	667	8%	17%
<b>HE enrolments on programmes with a national qualification aim</b>	<b>4,911</b>		
Completed programme	4,523	92%	86%
Of those completing the programme			
{ Successful or progressing to the next year	4,184	93%	81%
{ Not gaining award but may have achieved partial success	339	7%	17%
{ Not assessed	0	0%	2%

Excludes enrolments where SUMs are less than 4. The weighting factor is SUMs so that the programmes with more activity are given higher weight.

Figure 6. Percentage of Student Activity by Subject 2001-02



Table 4. Student Achievement Ratio by Assessment Credit of Learning (SARU) 2001-02

Level of Study 2001-02	FE	HE
Assessment credits on which the student is enrolled with the awarding body	10,666	4,961
Assessment credits achieved	8,477	3,973
Student achievement ratio by assessment credits of learning - college PI	79%	80%
Student achievement ratio by assessment credits of learning - sector PI	74%	74%

Table 5. Staff with Teaching Qualifications 2001-02

Permanent Full-time Teaching Staff 2001-02		PI	
Total Staff	No. with a teaching qualification	% with a Teaching Qualification College	Sector
67	52	78%	84%

Figure 7. Full-time Equivalent Staff 2001-02

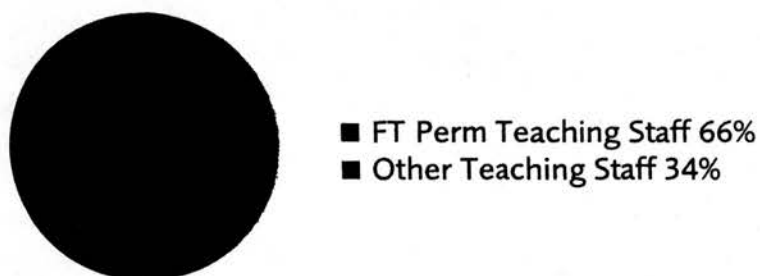




Figure 1. Enrolments by the Mode of Attendance and Age Band 2001-02

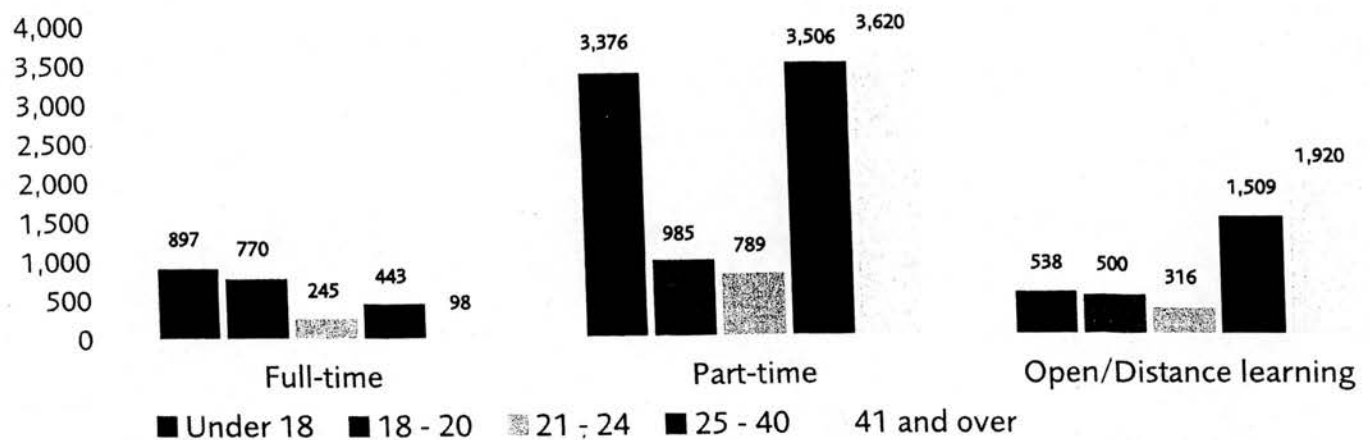


Figure 2. Percentage of Enrolments by Level and Gender 2001-02

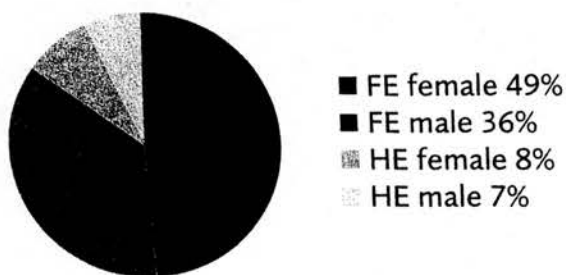


Figure 3. SUMs by Mode of Attendance, 1999-00 to 2001-02

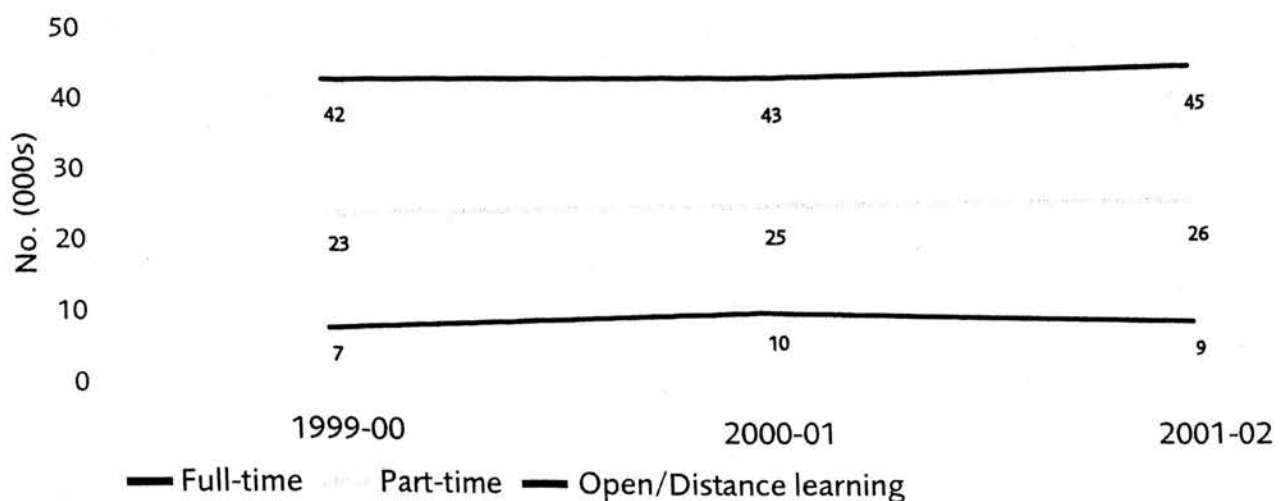


Table 1. Performance against Activity Targets 2000-01 and 2001-02

2000-01				2001-02			
WSUMs target	WSUMs delivered	WSUMs target achieved?	Difference from WSUMs target	WSUMs target	WSUMs delivered	WSUMs target achieved?	Difference from WSUMs target
83,350	84,152	Yes	+1.0%	87,380	88,273	Yes	+1.0%

Where a college under-enrolled by less than 3% in 2000-01 or 2% in 2001-02 they were not penalised by the council.

Table 2. Early Student Retention 2001-02

Mode	No. of enrolments	Enrolments meeting funding qualifying date	Early student retention percentage	
			College PI	Sector PI
FE Full-time	1,556	1,338	86%	86%
FE Part-time	15,783	15,282	97%	97%
HE Full-time	1,210	1,115	92%	90%
HE Part-time	1,880	1,777	95%	95%

Table 2a. Student Retention 2001-02

Mode	Weighted enrolments meeting funding qualifying date	No. of weighted enrolments completing course	Student retention percentage	
			College PI	Sector PI
FE Full-time	28,332	21,092	74%	78%
FE Part-time	29,729	27,375	92%	94%
HE Full-time	16,725	12,660	76%	83%
HE Part-time	9,240	8,509	92%	94%

Weighted enrolments are enrolments that have been adjusted to take account of the number of learning hours required to complete the course. The weighting is required to ensure that a 1 year full time course is distinguished from a 1 day course.

Figure 4. Total Student Enrolments 2001-02

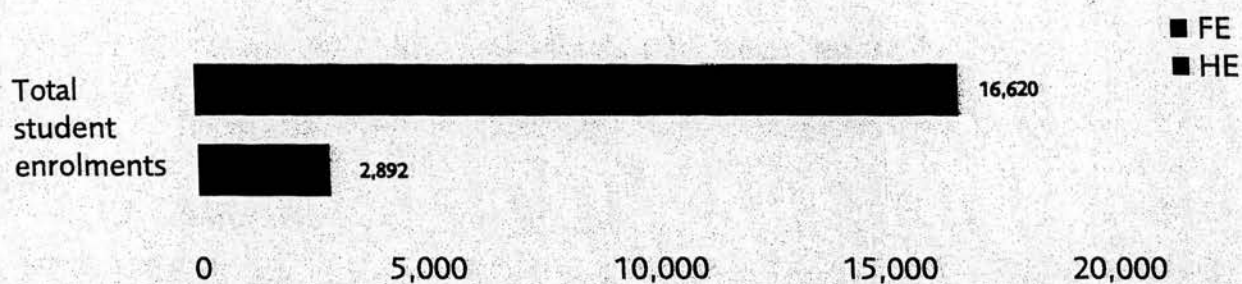


Figure 5. Percentage of Student Enrolments from Deprived areas, Social Inclusion Partnership areas and on Special Programmes 2001-02

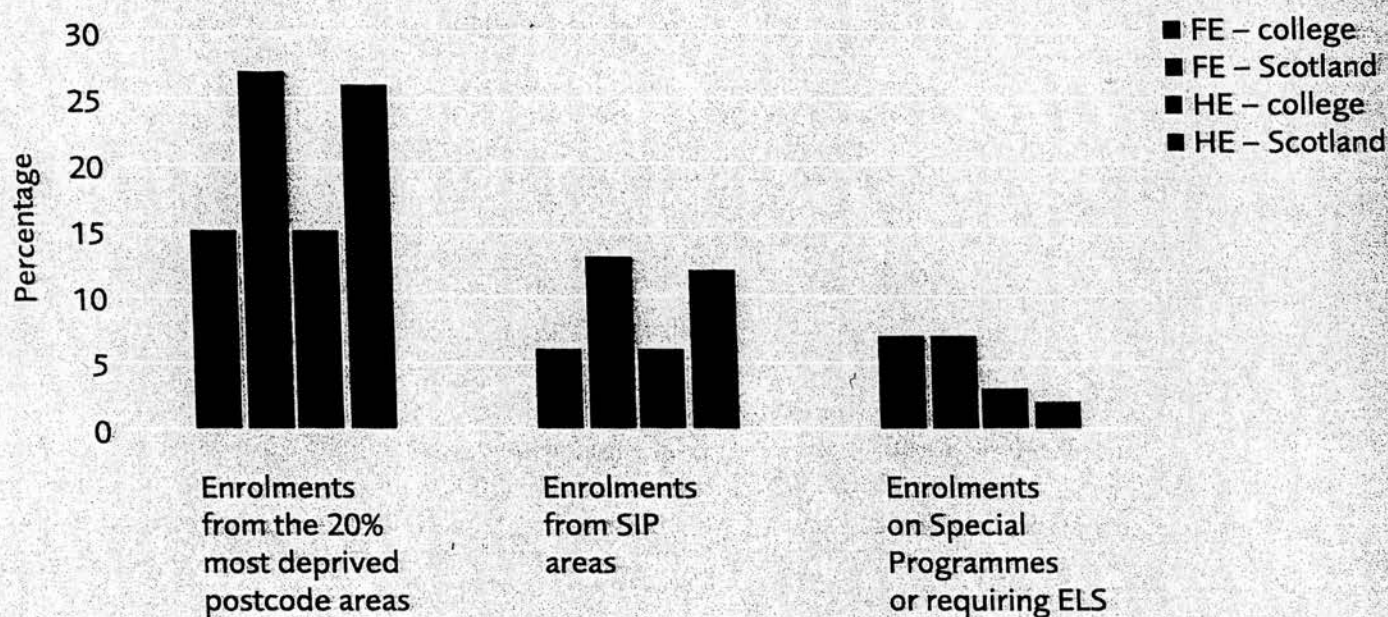


Table 3. Student Outcome 2001-02

2001-02	Weighted Enrolments	College PI	Sector PI
<b>FE enrolments on programmes with a national qualification aim</b>	<b>28,268</b>		
Completed programme	22,905	81%	83%
Of those completing the programme			
{ Successful or progressing to the next year	16,582	72%	75%
{ Not gaining award but may have achieved partial success	5,720	25%	18%
{ Not assessed	603	3%	7%
<b>FE enrolments on locally devised or individual tailored programmes</b>	<b>18,498</b>		
Completed programme	14,692	79%	83%
Of those completing the programme			
{ Successful or progressing to the next year	11,058	75%	83%
{ Not gaining award but may have achieved partial success	3,634	25%	17%
<b>HE enrolments on programmes with a national qualification aim</b>	<b>25,098</b>		
Completed programme	20,357	81%	86%
Of those completing the programme			
{ Successful or progressing to the next year	16,645	82%	81%
{ Not gaining award but may have achieved partial success	3,668	18%	17%
{ Not assessed	44	0%	2%

Excludes enrolments where SUMs are less than 4. The weighting factor is SUMs so that the programmes with more activity are given higher weight.

Figure 6. Percentage of Student Activity by Subject 2001-02



Table 4. Student Achievement Ratio by Assessment Credit of Learning (SARU) 2001-02

Level of Study 2001-02	FE	HE
Assessment credits on which the student is enrolled with the awarding body	22,718	20,807
Assessment credits achieved	15,512	15,155
Student achievement ratio by assessment credits of learning - college PI	68%	73%
Student achievement ratio by assessment credits of learning - sector PI	74%	74%

Table 5. Staff with Teaching Qualifications 2001-02

Permanent Full-time Teaching Staff 2001-02		PI	
Total Staff	No. with a teaching qualification	% with a Teaching Qualification College	Sector
200	165	83%	84%

Figure 7. Full-time Equivalent Staff 2001-02

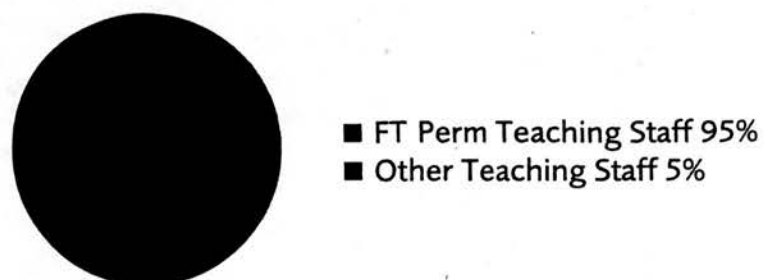




Figure 1. Enrolments by the Mode of Attendance and Age Band 2001-02

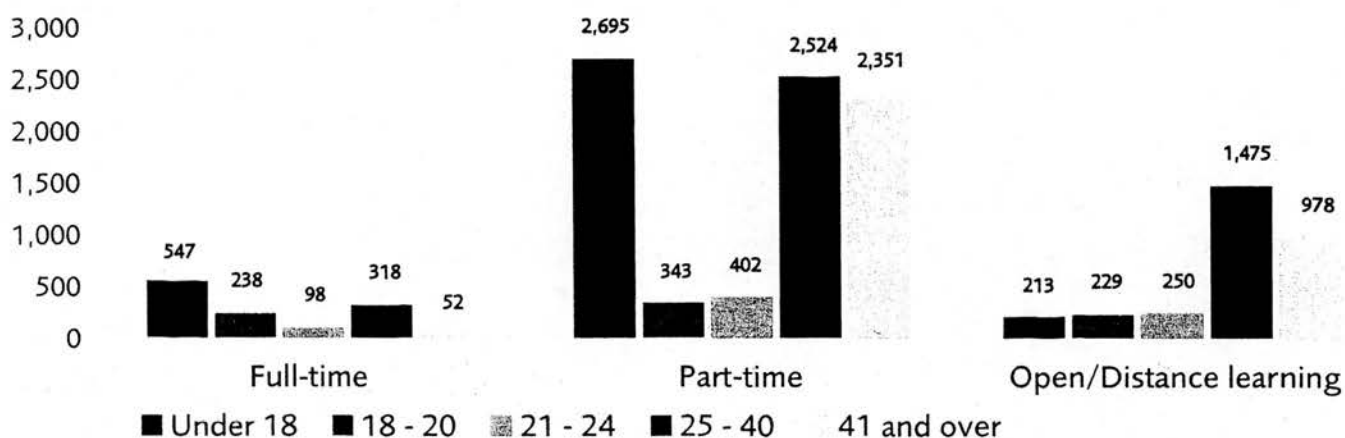


Figure 2. Percentage of Enrolments by Level and Gender 2001-02



Figure 3. SUMs by Mode of Attendance, 1999-00 to 2001-02

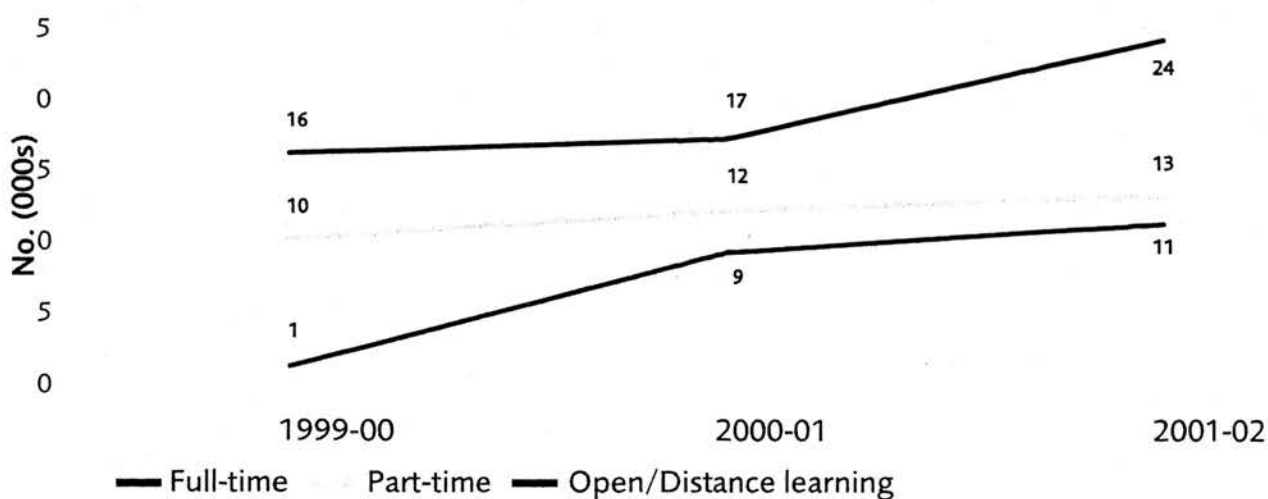


Table 1. Performance against Activity Targets 2000-01 and 2001-02

2000-01				2001-02			
WSUMs target	WSUMs delivered	WSUMs target achieved?	Difference from WSUMs target	WSUMs target	WSUMs delivered	WSUMs target achieved?	Difference from WSUMs target
33,204	39,270	Yes	+18.3%	43,181	51,474	Yes	+19.2%

Where a college under-enrolled by less than 3% in 2000-01 or 2% in 2001-02 they were not penalised by the council.

Table 2. Early Student Retention 2001-02

Mode	No. of enrolments	Enrolments meeting funding qualifying date	Early student retention percentage	
			College PI	Sector PI
FE Full-time	1,040	896	86%	86%
FE Part-time	10,165	10,048	99%	97%
HE Full-time	379	357	94%	90%
HE Part-time	1,460	1,412	97%	95%

Table 2a. Student Retention 2001-02

Mode	Weighted enrolments meeting funding qualifying date	No. of weighted enrolments completing course	Student retention percentage	
			College PI	Sector PI
FE Full-time	18,932	14,307	76%	78%
FE Part-time	23,299	20,422	88%	94%
HE Full-time	5,355	4,020	75%	83%
HE Part-time	4,055	3,188	79%	94%

Weighted enrolments are enrolments that have been adjusted to take account of the number of learning hours required to complete the course. The weighting is required to ensure that a 1 year full time course is distinguished from a 1 day course.

Figure 4. Total Student Enrolments 2001-02

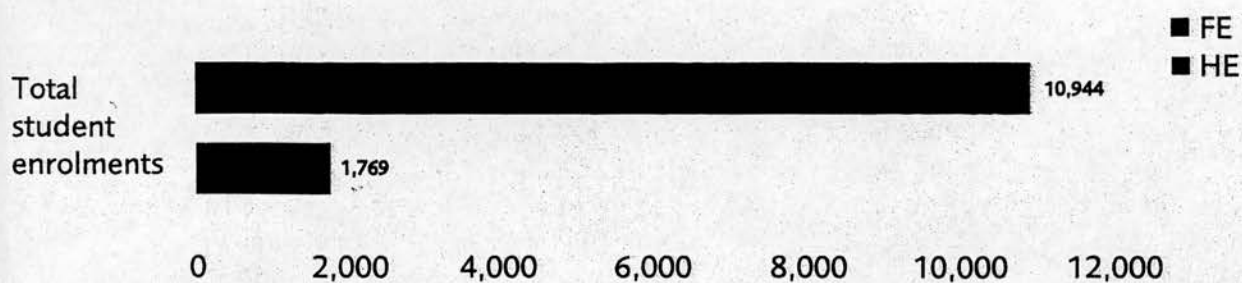


Figure 5. Percentage of Student Enrolments from Deprived areas, Social Inclusion Partnership areas and on Special Programmes 2001-02

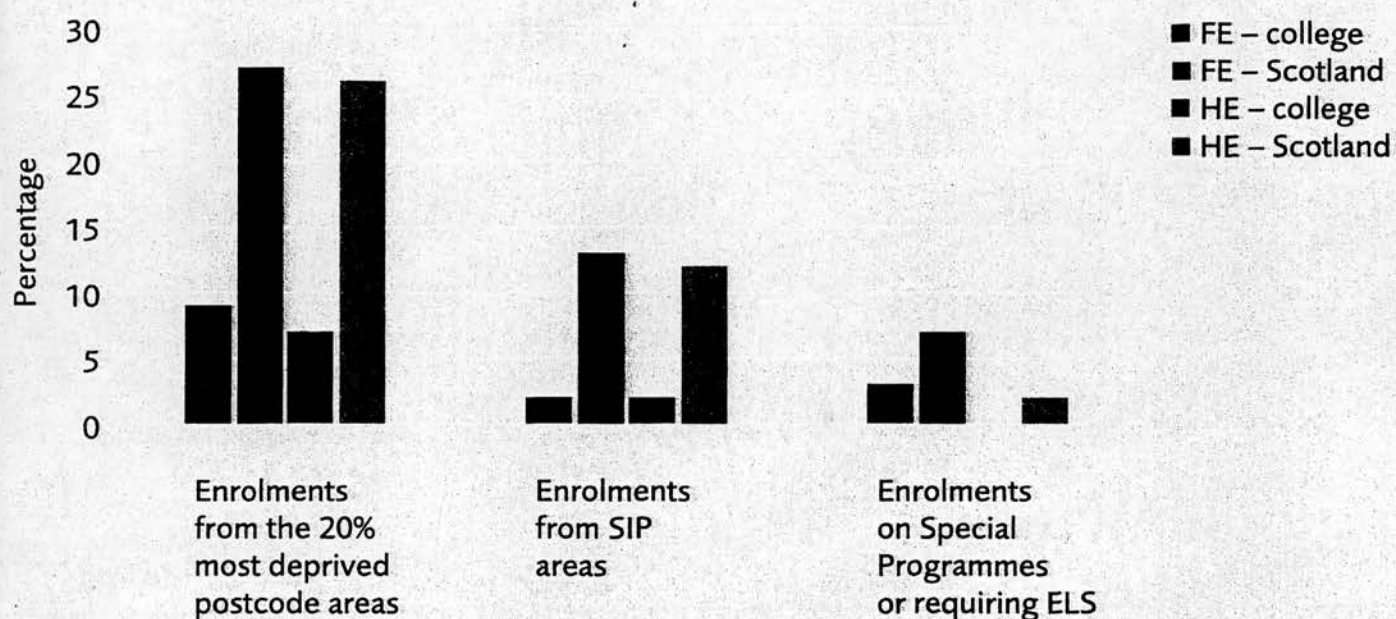


Table 3. Student Outcome 2001-02

2001-02		Weighted Enrolments	College PI	Sector PI
<b>FE enrolments on programmes with a national qualification aim</b>				
Completed programme		28,903		
		22,865	79%	83%
Of those completing the programme	Successful or progressing to the next year	20,452	89%	75%
	Not gaining award but may have achieved partial success	1,069	5%	18%
	Not assessed	1,344	6%	7%
<b>FE enrolments on locally devised or individual tailored programmes</b>				
Completed programme		8,264		
		7,296	88%	83%
Of those completing the programme	Successful or progressing to the next year	7,237	99%	83%
	Not gaining award but may have achieved partial success	59	1%	17%
<b>HE enrolments on programmes with a national qualification aim</b>				
Completed programme		8,113		
		6,153	76%	86%
Of those completing the programme	Successful or progressing to the next year	5,893	96%	81%
	Not gaining award but may have achieved partial success	87	1%	17%
	Not assessed	173	3%	2%

Includes enrolments where SUMs are less than 4. The weighting factor is SUMs so that the programmes with more activity are given higher weight.

Figure 6. Percentage of Student Activity by Subject 2001-02



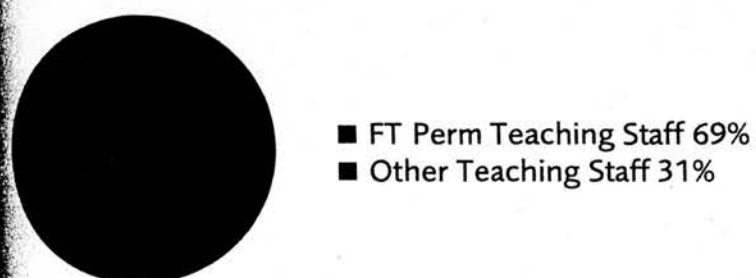
Table 4. Student Achievement Ratio by Assessment Credit of Learning (SARU) 2001-02

Level of Study 2001-02	FE	HE
Assessment credits on which the student is enrolled with the awarding body	31,381	9,717
Assessment credits achieved	25,046	7,806
Student achievement ratio by assessment credits of learning - college PI	80%	80%
Student achievement ratio by assessment credits of learning - sector PI	74%	74%

Table 5. Staff with Teaching Qualifications 2001-02

Permanent Full-time Teaching Staff 2001-02		PI	
Total Staff	No. with a teaching qualification	% with a Teaching Qualification College	Sector
88	57	65%	84%

Figure 7. Full-time Equivalent Staff 2001-02





**College Name**

Address

Telephone

Fax

Email

Web Site

# Appendix 28

**Table 1: Student Enrolments by Level and Mode of Attendance for 1999-00, 2000-01 and 2001-02**

All enrolments including Vocational and Non-vocational

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
1999 - 2000	444	5,836	6,280	212	330	542	656	6,166	6,822
2000 - 2001	447	7,849	8,296	160	308	468	607	8,157	8,764
2001- 2002	434	9,310	9,744	153	320	473	587	9,630	10,217

Source: SFEFC FES Returns 1999-2000 , 2000-2001 and 2001-02

**Table 2: Student Enrolments by Gender, Level and Mode of Attendance 2001-2002**

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Full-Time	260	174	434	75	78	153	335	252	587
Part-Time	3,007	6,303	9,310	148	172	320	3,155	6,475	9,630
Total	3,267	6,477	9,744	223	250	473	3,490	6,727	10,217

Source: SFEFC FES Return 2001 - 2002

**Table 3: Student Enrolments by Age\*, Level and Mode of Attendance 2001-2002**

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Under 18 years	222	1,150	1,372	19	10	29	241	1,160	1,401
18 to 20 years	93	439	532	45	34	79	138	473	611
21 to 24 years	37	428	465	22	40	62	59	468	527
25 to 40 years	64	2,420	2,484	52	138	190	116	2,558	2,674
41 and over	18	4,873	4,891	15	98	113	33	4,971	5,004
Total	434	9,310	9,744	153	320	473	587	9,630	10,217

Source: SFEFC FES Returns 2001-2002

\*Age is age of student as of the 1st August 2001

**Table 4: College Funding Details for 2001-02, 2002-2003 and 2003-04**

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Grant in Aid:	£2,788,181	£2,831,758	£3,006,996
Fee Waiver Claim:	£295,036	£274,203	£267,477
Bursary Allocation:	£580,172	£285,067	£459,658
Weighted SUMs:	24,014	*n/a	*n/a
Weighted SUMs Target:	23,064	23,075	23,075

Grant-in-aid 2003-2004: Figures as at 9 July 2003 (circular FE/22/03)

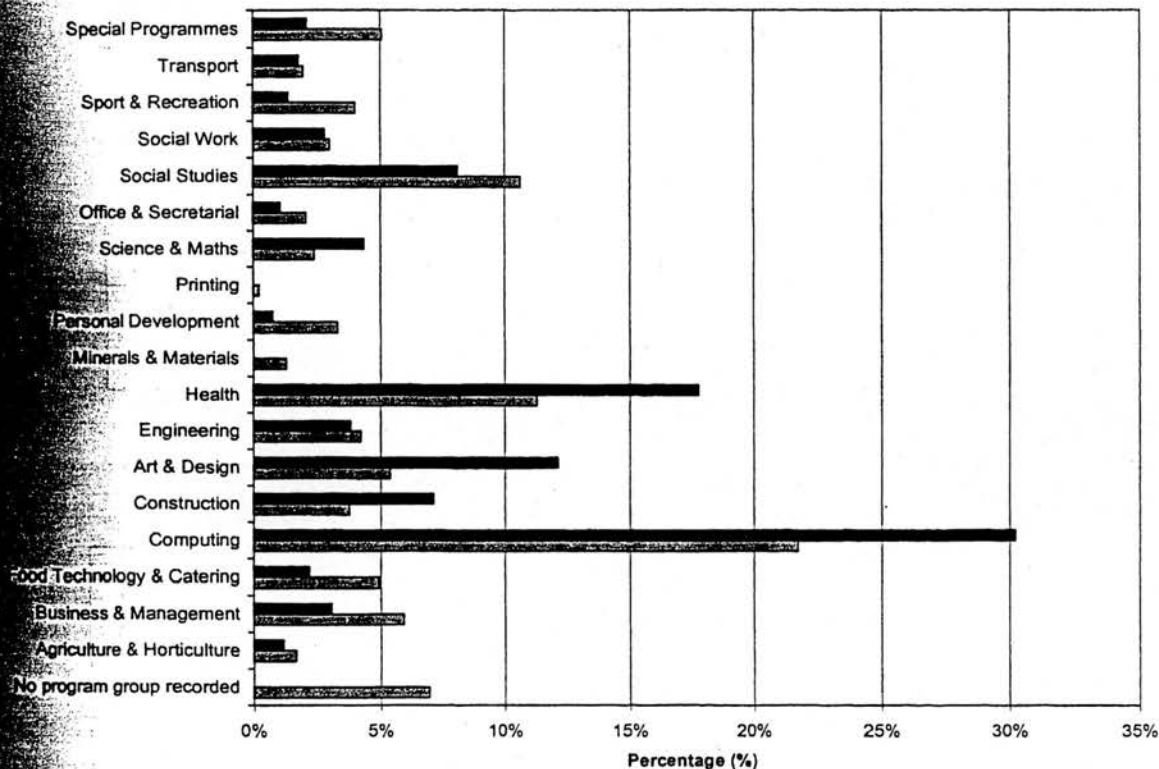
\*n/a - Figure is not available at this date

Table 5: Staffing Figures in Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) 2001-2002

	Permanent			Temporary			All Staff		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Teaching	42	3	45	0	26	26	42	29	71
Non-Teaching	47	15	62	0	2	2	47	17	64
Total	89	18	107	0	28	28	89	46	135

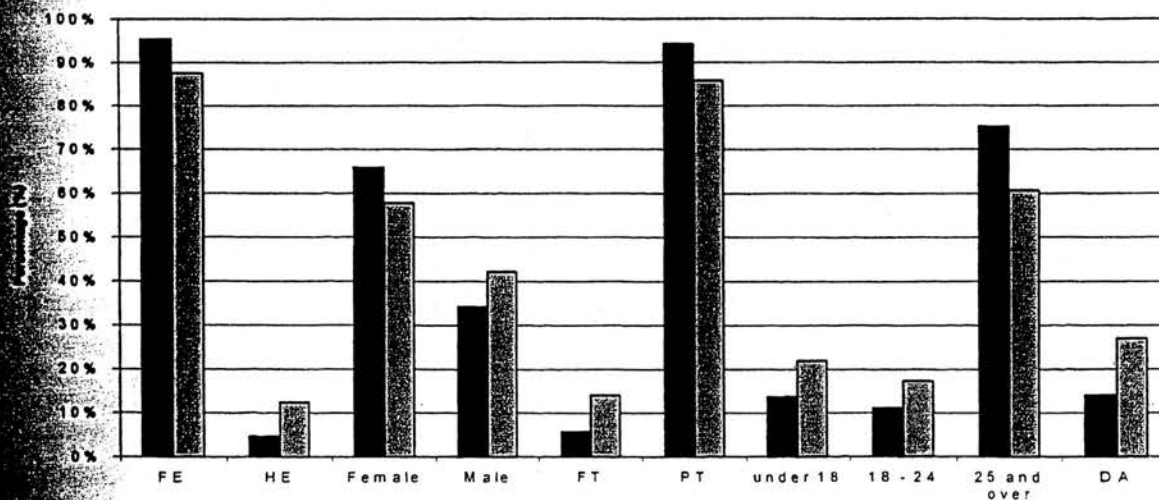
Source: SFEFC Staffing Return 2001-2002

Graph 1: Percentage of Enrolments by Dominant Programme Group; College and Scotland Figures



Source: SFEFC FES Return 2001-02

Graph 2 : Percentage of Enrolments by Level, Gender, Mode of Study, Age and those from the most disadvantaged areas\*



\* Enrolments from the Most Disadvantaged Areas

Source: SFEFC FES Return 2001-02

College Name

Address

Telephone

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## Appendix 29

Table 1: Student Enrolments by Level and Mode of Attendance for 1999-00, 2000-01 and 2001-02

All enrolments including Vocational and Non-vocational

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
1999 - 2000	697	4,036	4,733	186	235	421	883	4,271	5,154
2000 - 2001	847	5,286	6,133	229	300	529	1,076	5,586	6,662
2001- 2002	938	6,577	7,515	224	393	617	1,162	6,970	8,132

Source: SFEFC FES Returns 1999-2000 , 2000-2001 and 2001-02

Table 2: Student Enrolments by Gender, Level and Mode of Attendance 2001-2002

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Full-Time	504	434	938	95	129	224	599	563	1,162
Part-Time	2,452	4,125	6,577	95	298	393	2,547	4,423	6,970
Total	2,956	4,559	7,515	190	427	617	3,146	4,986	8,132

Source: SFEFC FES Return 2001 - 2002

Table 3: Student Enrolments by Age\*, Level and Mode of Attendance 2001-2002

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Under 18 years	485	1,533	2,018	38	3	41	523	1,536	2,059
18 to 20 years	154	307	461	69	18	87	223	325	548
21 to 24 years	75	346	421	26	44	70	101	390	491
25 to 40 years	161	1,688	1,849	70	220	290	231	1,908	2,139
41 and over	63	2,703	2,766	21	108	129	84	2,811	2,895
Total	938	6,577	7,515	224	393	617	1,162	6,970	8,132

Source: SFEFC FES Returns 2001-2002

\*Age is age of student as of the 1st August 2001

Table 4: College Funding Details for 2001-02, 2002-2003 and 2003-04

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Grant in Aid:	£3,318,987	£3,376,901	£3,757,996
Fee Waiver Claim:	£694,500	£561,019	£518,843
Bursary Allocation:	£531,531	£553,109	£621,836
Weighted SUMs:	30,479	*n/a	*n/a
Weighted SUMs Target:	29,490	29,505	29,505

Grant-in-aid 2003-2004: Figures as at 9 July 2003 (circular FE/22/03)

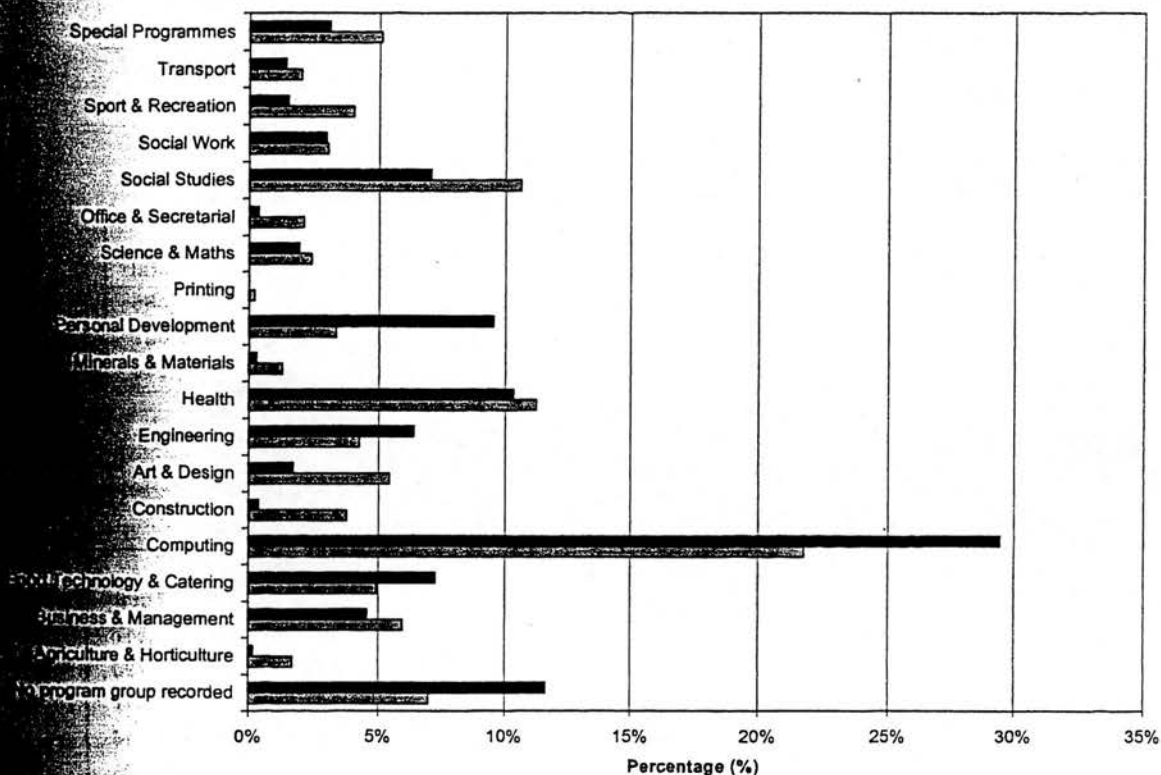
\*n/a - Figure is not available at this date

Table 5: Staffing Figures in Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) 2001-2002

	Permanent			Temporary			All Staff		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Teaching	64	3	67	0	30	30	64	33	97
Non-Teaching	64	6	70	17	2	19	81	8	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>187</b>

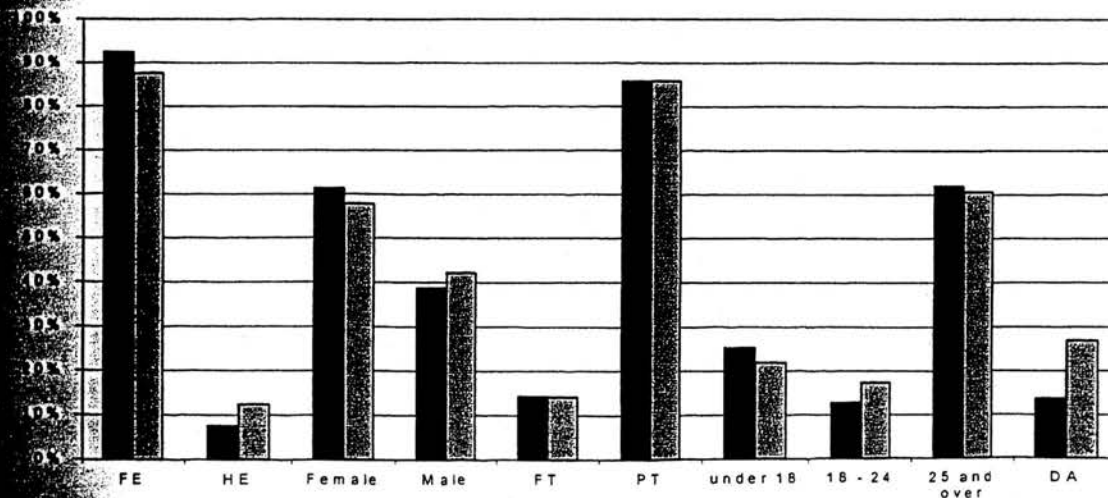
Source: SFEFC Staffing Return 2001-2002

Graph 1: Percentage of Enrolments by Dominant Programme Group; College and Scotland Figures



Source: SFEFC FES Return 2001-02

Graph 2: Percentage of Enrolments by Level, Gender, Mode of Study, Age and those from the most disadvantaged areas\*



Enrolments from the Most Disadvantaged Areas

SFEFC FES Return 2001-02

College Name

Address

Telephone

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Email

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## Appendix 30

Table 1: Student Enrolments by Level and Mode of Attendance for 1999-00, 2000-01 and 2001-02

All enrolments including Vocational and Non-vocational

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
1999 - 2000	1,190	12,723	13,913	1,241	2,288	3,529	2,431	15,011	17,442
2000 - 2001	1,345	15,176	16,521	1,099	2,069	3,168	2,444	17,245	19,689
2001- 2002	1,338	15,521	16,859	1,116	2,061	3,177	2,454	17,582	20,036

Source: SFEFC FES Returns 1999-2000 , 2000-2001 and 2001-02

Table 2: Student Enrolments by Gender, Level and Mode of Attendance 2001-2002

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Full-Time	647	691	1,338	495	621	1,116	1,142	1,312	2,454
Part-Time	6,426	9,095	15,521	965	1,096	2,061	7,391	10,191	17,582
Total	7,073	9,786	16,859	1,460	1,717	3,177	8,533	11,503	20,036

Source: SFEFC FES Return 2001 - 2002

Table 3: Student Enrolments by Age\*, Level and Mode of Attendance 2001-2002

	Further Education			Higher Education			All Students		
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Under 18 years	715	3,930	4,645	182	54	236	897	3,984	4,881
18 to 20 years	316	1,187	1,503	454	333	787	770	1,520	2,290
21 to 24 years	77	921	998	168	225	393	245	1,146	1,391
25 to 40 years	191	4,340	4,531	253	906	1,159	444	5,246	5,690
41 and over	39	5,143	5,182	59	543	602	98	5,686	5,784
Total	1,338	15,521	16,859	1,116	2,061	3,177	2,454	17,582	20,036

Source: SFEFC FES Returns 2001-2002

\*Age is age of student as of the 1st August 2001

Table 4: College Funding Details for 2001-02, 2002-2003 and 2003-04

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Grant in Aid:	£9,606,125	£10,043,625	£10,751,345
Fee Waiver Claim:	£1,212,184	£1,113,275	£1,254,104
Bursary Allocation:	£1,444,428	£1,059,821	£1,434,293
Weighted SUMs:	88,273	*n/a	*n/a
Weighted SUMs Target:	87,380	87,423	87,423

Grant-in-aid 2003-2004: Figures as at 9 July 2003 (circular FE/22/03)

\*n/a - Figure is not available at this date

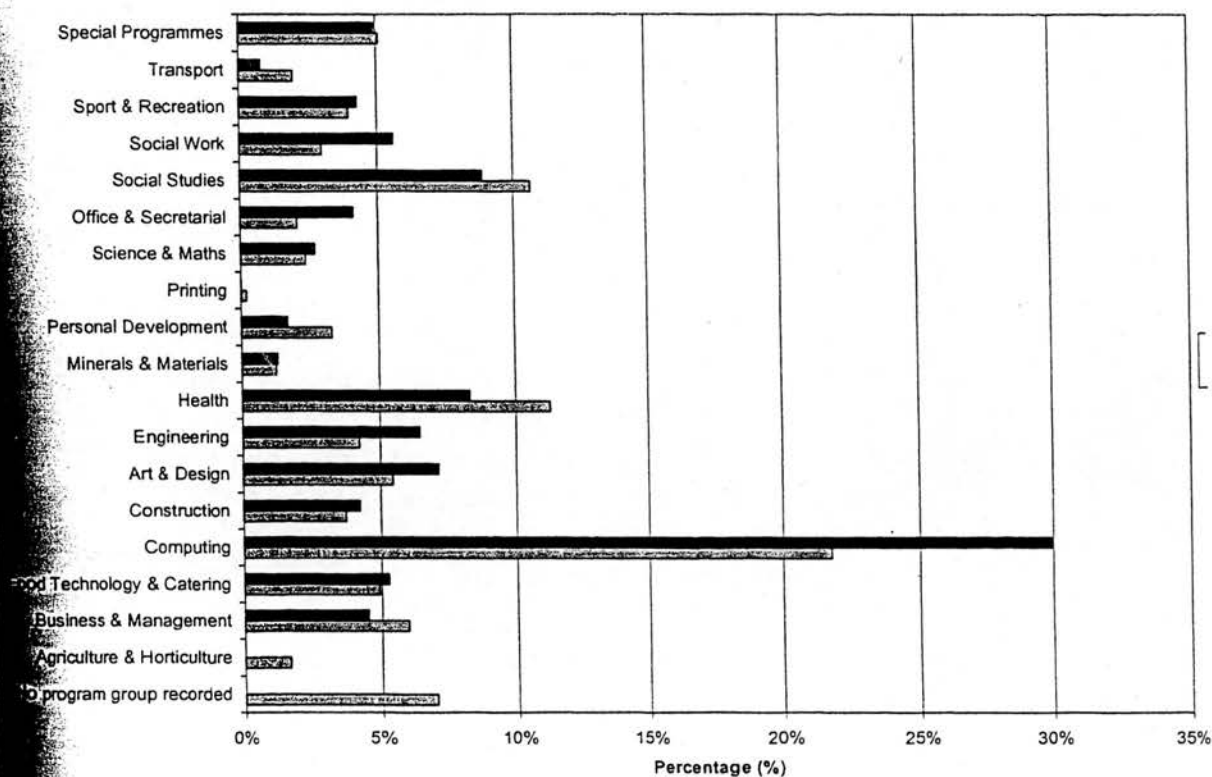


Table 5: Staffing Figures in Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) 2001-2002

	Permanent			Temporary			All Staff		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Teaching	168	4	172	4	1	6	173	5	178
Non-Teaching	113	9	121	10	11	22	123	20	143
Total	281	13	294	15	13	27	296	25	321

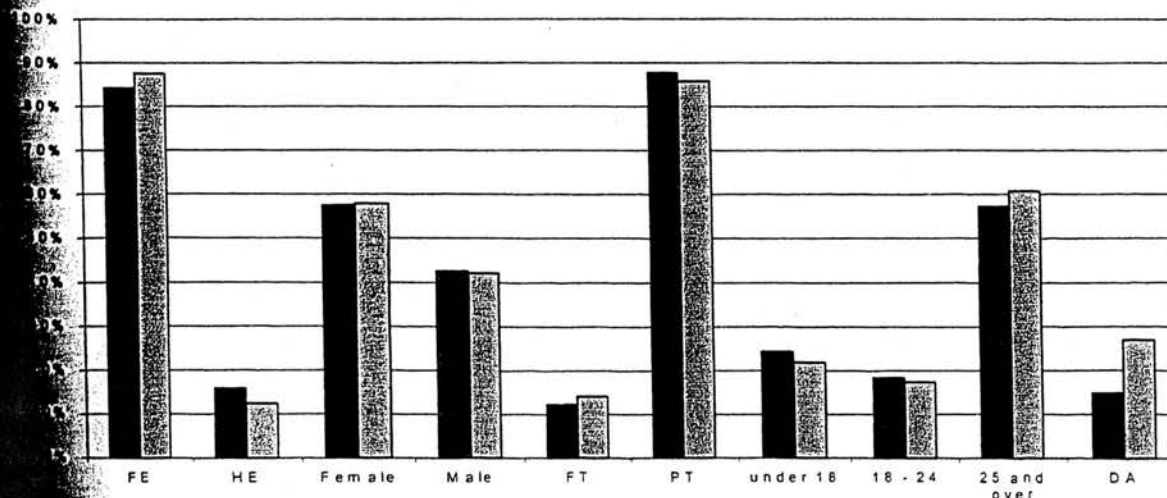
Source: SFEFC Staffing Return 2001-2002

Graph 1: Percentage of Enrolments by Dominant Programme Group; College and Scotland Figures



Source: SFEFC FES Return 2001-02

Graph 2: Percentage of Enrolments by Level, Gender, Mode of Study, Age and those from the most disadvantaged areas\*



\*Enrolments from the Most Disadvantaged Areas

Source: SFEFC FES Return 2001-02